

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC INPUT

City of St. Albert — Mayor and Council
March 2026

Formal Submission

Youth Transitional Housing Project / Bylaw 7/2026

Formal Submission:

Standing Committee of the Whole (March 10, 2026)

Public Hearing (March 17, 2026)

Re: Formal Submission — Youth Transitional Housing Project / Bylaw 7/2026

Standing Committee of the Whole — March 10, 2026 | Public Hearing — March 17, 2026

Dear Mayor Olivieri and Members of Council,

I am a homeowner and resident of The Gardens neighbourhood, directly adjacent to the parcel at 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue (the former Firehall No. 1 site). I have lived in this community long enough to know my neighbours, walk the Lions Park trails most mornings, and care about what gets built on the land we share. I am submitting this document for the formal record of **both** the March 10 Standing Committee of the Whole and the March 17 Public Hearing on Bylaw 7/2026, and I will be presenting in person at both proceedings.

I want to be clear about what I am not doing. I am not here to oppose youth housing. I believe we have a responsibility to care for vulnerable young people. The questions I am raising are different: was the right parcel chosen? Was the feasibility work sound? Was the community given a genuine opportunity to weigh in before we reclassify public land?

I have read the feasibility study carefully, walked the site and surrounding area, and spoken with neighbours throughout The Gardens. What I found raised enough questions that I think Council deserves to hear them before this land changes hands.

This submission addresses two things that are presented separately but are directly connected: a decision about land classification, and an initiative to build a youth housing facility on that land.

Reclassifying the municipal reserve removes one of the few formal mechanisms the public has to weigh in on how this parcel is used. I am asking Council to pause on both — not because the goal is wrong, but because the plan isn't finished, and engaging the community before the land changes hands is still possible.

What follows are eight concerns I am asking this Council to take seriously.

1. Was the Right Work Done Before This Came to Council?
2. Is There a Plan? And Did the Feasibility Study Get the Site Right?
3. Was This Site Properly Evaluated for the People It Would Serve?
4. What the Community Wants to Know
5. What Are Other Communities Doing — and What Does the Research Say?
6. What Other Communities Have Learned — and What Will We Do Differently?
7. Why March 10 and March 17 Are Connected
8. A Request to Finish the Work First

Jeremiah

Resident, The Gardens, St. Albert

1. Was the Right Work Done Before This Came to Council?

It is worth understanding how we arrived at March 17. The feasibility study recommended 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue as the preferred site. That recommendation was accepted in June 2025 and Administration was directed to bring forward a bylaw removing the municipal reserve designation. The bylaw follows from that project decision. *That sequence is in the public record.* It is also worth asking what mechanism, outside of this designation, would require the City to hold a public hearing before this parcel changes hands. *The MR designation is the only formal protection the public has over what happens to this land. Once it is removed, there is no further obligation to consult.*

In 2020, the City commissioned the Mayor's Task Force to End Homelessness. The Task Force's first recommendation was not to find a site. It was not to propose a bylaw. It was to develop a business plan: a named operator, confirmed funding, a governance model, an operational framework, before any land decision was made.

"The Task Force is recommending developing a business plan for the construction and operation of a new youth transitional home."

Five years later, those prerequisites are not in place. No operator has been named. YESS, the primary regional youth housing provider, is actively reducing its housing program, as the feasibility study itself acknowledges. There is no confirmed capital funding, no confirmed operating funding, no governance structure, and no program design. The 2020 Task Force said build the plan first. That plan does not yet exist.

The City's own Community Social Roadmap, adopted under Policy C-CS-16 in 2024, lists youth transitional housing as a high priority action item. The exact wording: "Explore options for youth transitional housing in St. Albert." Explore options. That is where the City said it was as recently as July 2025. *Not: donate land and build a facility without public engagement.* The Roadmap was designed to initiate a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process. That process does not appear to have taken place before this parcel was selected.

In November 2022, the City's capital projects office manager told the Gazette that residents and Council would debate what to do with the old fire hall lands that winter. That debate never happened. *The topic went in-camera in January 2023, and when the parcel resurfaced publicly in 2024, it was attached to a feasibility study, without a public explanation of how the direction changed.*

The feasibility study's own risk section puts it plainly: "No formal commitment is in-place to bind the City or the organizations to the project after the publication of this Study." Council is being asked to commit public parkland on the strength of a study that its own authors acknowledge commits no one to anything.

Council policy C-CG-05 section 1(e) places a personal obligation on every member to seek public input on bylaws and decisions before direction is given. The engagement obligation in that policy is a personal one, not something that can be delegated. The question worth putting to this Council is whether it has had sufficient opportunity to consult before being asked to make a permanent land decision.

Questions for Council:

- Has the business plan the 2020 Task Force recommended been completed?
 - If not, what has changed that makes it appropriate to permanently commit public land without one?
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2. Is There a Plan? And Did the Feasibility Study Get the Site Right?

Before asking whether this is the right parcel, it is worth asking what the project looks like. At this point there is no identified operator, no building design, no site plan, no traffic study, no parking plan, no community impact assessment, no operating agreement, and no confirmed provincial funding. These are not minor details. *They are the things that would normally be known before a community is asked to reclassify public land permanently.*

At the February 17 Standing Committee, Mayor Olivieri asked administration whether the building was expected to be nine storeys and raised concerns about the age range the facility would serve. Administration could not give a definitive answer, because there is no plan. That is the point. When the Mayor of the city doesn't know what the building will look like or how it will operate, **residents are left to fill that silence with their own assumptions**. Bold numbers enter the public conversation with no design and no context for anyone to respond to. That is a gap this Council has both the opportunity and the responsibility to correct before making a permanent decision.

Once the municipal reserve designation is removed and the land is donated, the City would have to buy it back at fair market value to reclaim it. That is worth pausing on. Councillor Clark raised this directly in February 2026, and it had been raised previously as well. The reasonable question is whether the project on the other side of that decision should be more fully formed before it is made.

Did the feasibility study measure the right parcel?

The feasibility study is the only document justifying the selection of this site. Reading it carefully, there is a measurement discrepancy that affects the core analysis and is worth putting to Administration directly.

The study modelled Site 3 (16/18 Sir Winston Churchill) using a parcel area of 594 square metres. The actual developable lot, Lot 1MR at 16 Sir Winston Churchill, is approximately 0.167 hectares, or roughly 1,670 square metres. That is nearly three times larger than what was modelled. The study calculated land value by multiplying the parcel area by a cost-per-square-metre rate. That error doesn't sit quietly in one table. It flows through the capital cost analysis, the site scoring, and the recommendation.

Metric	Study Used	Corrected Figure
Parcel area	594 m ²	~1,670 m ²
Land value @ \$531.90/m ²	\$316,000	~\$888,000
Understatement	—	~\$572,000

What happens to the site ranking if the area is corrected?

Sites 2 and 3 tied on the scoring matrix at 14 out of 15 points each. Site 2 is 13 Mission Avenue: nearly a full acre, already zoned Direct Control where transitional residential services are a permitted use, requiring no MR removal, no redistricting, and no public hearing. Development cost was approximately \$500,000 less. That site was subsequently sold to a private buyer.

The only factor that broke the tie was a lower land cost for Site 3, which appears to result from the parcel being measured at roughly a third of its actual size. Correcting the area corrects the valuation, and the cost advantage disappears. The feasibility study does not explain why Mission Avenue, which scored identically and required none of this complexity, was not selected. The study also notes that redistricting requires community education and support. That condition was not met before this site was recommended.

Questions for Council:

- Has Administration reviewed the site scoring using the actual parcel area?
 - If the corrected figures change the ranking, what does the revised analysis show?
 - Why was Mission Avenue, an identically scored site requiring no parkland removal and no public hearing, not selected?
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3. Was This Site Properly Evaluated for the People It Would Serve?

This section is about the young people who would actually live at this facility, not the neighbourhood around it. The question worth asking is whether this specific location was evaluated for their needs, not just for its availability.

The youth this facility is meant to serve are not a generic population. The Without a Home survey (Canada's largest study of homeless youth, over 1,100 respondents across 47 communities) found that 42 percent had attempted suicide. Many are fleeing abuse, carrying trauma, managing mental health crises, or in early stages of recovery from addiction. These are not abstract statistics. They describe real young people whose stability depends on an environment that is genuinely therapeutic and genuinely safe. The site selection process has not asked that question.

The Walk from City Hall: A Liquor Store on the Way

Walk the route from City Hall to this facility. You'll pass a licensed liquor store approximately 68 metres from the proposed site. It sits directly on the path most residents would take between the facility and the downtown core: the library, the transit stop, social services.

This matters enormously for a young person in recovery or managing addiction. The Without a Home survey found 35 percent of homeless youth had experienced a drug overdose requiring hospitalization. Recovery research is consistent and clear on this: environmental cues are not passive. ***A liquor store on the daily walking route is not a neutral feature.*** For a young person who is genuinely trying to stabilize their life, that proximity creates a daily friction point that a well-designed site would not. We are designing for failure before the doors open.

Noise, vibration, and a population that cannot tolerate it

I live in The Gardens. I know what the CN Rail corridor sounds like from this neighbourhood. The mandatory horn at the crossing. The low vibration that moves through the ground before you even hear the train. The sudden loud sound in the middle of the night when a freight train passes and triggers the horn.

For most residents, this is background noise. For a young person with acute anxiety, or trauma-related hyper-vigilance, it is something else entirely. Sudden, unpredictable loud noise is a documented trigger for trauma responses, not a minor inconvenience but a physiological event that can undo hours of stability in seconds. ***Placing youth with documented trauma histories in a building where freight train horns sound at irregular hours is not therapeutic. It is the opposite.***

The City's own Municipal Engineering Standards, at section 3.3.1.9, require a Noise Impact Assessment when both a railway and an arterial road are adjacent to a proposed residential or institutional development. Sir Winston Churchill Avenue is a major arterial. The CN Rail corridor is nearby. Both conditions exist. The 2024 Land Use Bylaw classifies supportive housing as a Sensitive Land Use, the same standard applied to schools, daycares, and hospitals, precisely because vulnerable occupants

require a higher environmental standard before a site is confirmed. That standard has not been applied here. No Noise Impact Assessment has been produced.

The Rail Crossing: What One Moment Can Mean

The street-level CN Rail crossing is accessible on foot from this site. Youth in transitional housing are not in a secure facility. They come and go. The facility provides structure inside its walls. It does not and cannot control where residents walk.

The Transportation Safety Board reported 56 trespasser fatalities on Canadian railways in 2024, up from 53 the year before. In 2024, 59 percent of trespasser accidents on Canadian railways were fatal. Research from UQAM found that railway accidents are disproportionately fatal for young adults, accounting for 41 to 45 percent of that age group's railway fatalities, and that victims are often familiar with the tracks because they live nearby.

Forty-two percent of the young people this facility would serve may be at risk of self-harm. Railway trespassing incidents involving youth are disproportionately not accidental. They happen in moments of crisis, moments of impulsivity, moments when a person who is genuinely struggling makes a decision in a few seconds that cannot be undone.

Proximity to an accessible rail crossing is not a neutral planning detail for this population. It is a safety risk that requires formal assessment.

That assessment does not exist. No one has evaluated whether the distance to the crossing, the sight lines, the access points, or the pedestrian routes in this area are appropriate for a facility housing youth with documented suicidal ideation.

Lions Park Is Not Supervised: What the Planning Principles Say

Lions Park is directly across Sir Winston Churchill Avenue from this site, one of St. Albert's oldest and most loved public spaces. Ninety-nine and a half kilometres of connected trails. Playgrounds. Picnic shelters. Open fields. My family uses it. My neighbours use it every day.

It is also one of four St. Albert parks where alcohol consumption is permitted, from 11 AM to 9 PM in designated areas. And it has what Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED (the established framework cities use to evaluate exactly these questions) would flag as serious vulnerabilities: multiple uncontrolled entry and egress points, sheltered areas with limited sightlines, trail connections into the broader city network, and no natural access control in any direction. A CPTED assessment of that interface has not been done.

Here is the operational reality any honest assessment has to reckon with: the facility provides supervision inside its walls. Lions Park provides none. Youth will test boundaries. Youth in crisis will test them more. The feasibility study itself budgeted \$45,000 for security in year one. Administration anticipated the challenge. But there is no operational safety plan and no good-neighbour protocols, because no operator has been engaged.

A councillor suggested the facility would provide "*eyes on the park*" as a safety benefit. I want to be direct about this, because the phrase has real meaning in planning, and it's being used backwards here. "Eyes on the street" is a CPTED concept describing how the built environment watches over itself through legitimate daily activity. It does not mean placing vulnerable young people adjacent to an unsupervised park and calling them the safety benefit. That inverts the entire principle.

The site and the population it serves

The facility is proposed to serve youth ages 13 to 24. That is an eleven-year span. At one end: a 13-year-old girl fleeing a dangerous home, in the early stages of a mental health crisis. At the other: a 24-year-old man with years of street involvement, potentially complex addiction or criminal history. These are not interchangeable residents. They have profoundly different needs, different risk profiles, and different vulnerabilities relative to one another.

Any competent operator will tell you that co-housing these populations requires thoughtful design: dedicated wings or floors, controlled internal circulation, separate common areas, and carefully managed staff ratios for different cohorts. The developable parcel is approximately 0.167 hectares, less than half an acre. Whether this site can accommodate that complexity responsibly has never been assessed. Because there is no design. Because there is no operator. Because the land decision is being made first.

This is not a theoretical concern. Trauma-informed facility design for mixed youth populations is a specific discipline. It informs room placement, sightline design, corridor width, staff station locations, outdoor space allocation, and entry sequencing. None of that work has been done for this site.

How this site was chosen

This is the former Firehall No. 1 site, land the City had already decided to dispose of. In May 2022, Council directed it be rezoned for commercial and mixed-use development up to six storeys. That process went in-camera in January 2023. When the parcel resurfaced in 2024, it was attached to the youth housing feasibility study, without a public explanation of how the direction changed.

That is not site selection grounded in suitability. It is a parcel the City wanted to move on from, with a project attached to it after the fact. That is not governance its convenience.

Questions for Council:

- Has the Noise Impact Assessment required under the City's own Municipal Engineering Standards been produced?
 - Has the Sensitive Land Use standard under the 2024 Land Use Bylaw been applied to this site?
 - Has the rail crossing been assessed against the documented risk profile of this population?
 - Has a CPTED review been completed for the Lions Park interface?
 - Has any design work confirmed this site can safely serve a co-ed population spanning ages 13 to 24?
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4. What the Community Wants to Know

The residents I have spoken with are not opposed to youth housing. They are asking the kinds of questions any community would reasonably want answered before a major facility is placed in their neighbourhood. These questions have not yet been answered, largely because there is no operator and no plan that would answer them.

These are the questions coming from the community:

- What is the operating model? What happens when a resident is in distress outside the building at 2 AM, on the trail behind the site?
- What is the relationship with RCMP? How many calls for service are comparable facilities generating, and what should residents expect?
- What are the good neighbour commitments, and who enforces them? Who do I call if there's a problem?
- The trail system behind this site connects to the entire trail system. Families use it every day. Will there be more pedestrian traffic on those trails? Has anyone thought about that?
- Kids & Company daycare is 194 metres away. There are two public playgrounds within a two-minute walk. Has any consideration been given to that proximity?
- Amacon Properties is developing Grandin Parc Plaza directly adjacent to this site. Were they consulted? Were any adjacent homeowners, any of the businesses on that street, given any notice?
- What happens to this land if the project fails, the funding is cut, or the operator walks away? Once the MR designation is gone, it's gone.

These questions have no answers right now. There is no operator to provide them. When residents have nothing concrete to work with, uncertainty fills the gap. Providing answers before the land changes hands would go a long way toward building the community confidence this project needs to succeed.

On the BC Housing property values study

Administration has cited a BC Housing study to reassure residents that supportive housing doesn't affect property values. That study examined 13 sites in British Columbia from 2009 to 2018, during the single largest sustained housing boom in Canadian history. During that period, almost everything went up. The study's own authors state explicitly that a causal relationship between supportive housing and property values cannot be established. The study Council is relying on to reassure residents directly says it cannot prove what it's being used to claim. Residents raising this concern deserve an honest answer.

On the Grande Prairie reference

A councillor referenced Grande Prairie as a positive example and mentioned crime statistics in the area surrounding a facility there. That kind of research into how other communities are managing similar projects is exactly the right instinct, and it's the kind of engagement that has been missing from this process. But before that comparison can be applied here, it needs to be examined more carefully.

Grande Prairie has two distinct facilities. Cedar Point is a 106-unit adult supportive housing complex that co-located police and enforcement services inside the building beginning in April 2024. Sunrise House is the youth emergency shelter and transitional house. These are different facilities, serving different populations, with different operational models. Before any crime or neighbourhood data from Grande Prairie is applied to this project, it would be worth clarifying which facility the statistics relate to, whether a comparable published analysis exists for Sunrise House specifically, and what conditions produced the outcome being described.

On other options for this land

This site was previously directed toward commercial and mixed-use development at up to six storeys. That path would have generated substantial tax revenue, activated the downtown corridor, and created the kind of density the Flourish Municipal Development Plan calls for on major arterials. ***It is worth asking whether that direction was ever formally reconsidered, and whether alternatives were weighed before the land was redirected.***

Questions for Council:

- Has the community been given a genuine opportunity to weigh in on this project before a land decision is made?
 - What voice will residents have on this issue after the MR designation is stripped from the former firehall land?
 - How is St. Albert Council and Administration interfacing with residents and business on this project?
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5. What Are Other Communities Doing — and What Does the Research Say?

Before St. Albert commits public land permanently to a purpose-built residential facility, it is worth asking whether that model is what the evidence recommends, and whether the City has looked at what comparable communities are doing.

The research says: prevent first, build last

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness is Canada's leading research institution on this issue. Its position is unambiguous: the sector has for too long been organized around crisis response (shelters, emergency beds, transitional facilities) built after young people have already lost their housing. The evidence consistently shows that early intervention, before a young person reaches the street, produces better outcomes at lower cost and with far less community disruption than residential facilities built at the crisis end of the spectrum.

The Observatory's Reconnect program model is designed specifically for youth: identifying at-risk young people through schools and community networks before they lose housing, intervening with family mediation, mental health support, and stabilization services before a crisis occurs. A Way Home Canada, the national coalition on youth homelessness, co-leads this work and makes the same argument plainly: *we should not wait until young people become chronically homeless before we respond*. The homelessness sector alone cannot solve this. The systems that drive young people into homelessness, namely schools, child welfare, and health, all have to be part of the solution.

A purpose-built 16-bed transitional residential facility sits at the opposite end of that spectrum. It is a crisis-response infrastructure investment, built for young people who have already lost everything else. The research does not say don't build it. It says build the upstream prevention infrastructure first, and ask hard questions about whether a facility of this scale and cost is the right tool for the need being described.

The City's own data describes the local need as 12 to 30 youth in hidden homelessness: couch surfing, in unsafe family situations. A \$5.2 to \$5.7 million building at \$94,000 per bed per year is a significant response to that scale of problem. *And the City's own FCSS Senior Manager told Council in September 2024: "If you build it, they will come and they will come from everywhere because, especially for youth transitional housing, there's so little of it in the region."* Council should be prepared to answer: who comes, from where, and did St. Albert taxpayers understand they were potentially funding a regional facility by donating public parkland?

What comparable Alberta communities are doing

None of the following communities comparable to St. Albert in size and character indicate to have built a purpose-built residential youth transitional facility. They are addressing the population through prevention, navigation, and FCSS-based community support:

- **Leduc (pop. 35,000):** FCSS-funded Life Safety Navigators, extreme weather emergency protocols, and targeted rental assistance.
- **Airdrie (pop. 75,000):** Youth In Transition programming, crisis resilience supports, and mentorship through FCSS.
- **Strathcona County (pop. 100,000):** Solutions Navigation, youth-specific programming, and subsidized housing access through community partnerships.
- **Stony Plain:** FCSS-based prevention focused on family stabilization and early intervention.

The question is not whether these communities have found a perfect solution. The question is whether St. Albert has seriously engaged with what they're doing, and asked whether those approaches, combined or adapted, could address our local need before committing irreversible public land to a model the research says should come last.

Questions for Council:

- Has the City formally reviewed the prevention-based models operating in Leduc, Airdrie, Strathcona County, and Stony Plain?
- Has Administration consulted with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness or A Way Home Canada before recommending a purpose-built facility?
- **Why is the land decision being made before that review has happened?**

6. What Other Communities Have Learned — and What Will We Do Differently?

Other Canadian communities have pursued projects with the same good intentions behind this one — caring for people who are homeless, vulnerable, or at risk. Not all of these examples are identical to what is proposed here; some serve adults, some serve youth, and the scale and models differ. But the questions they surfaced are the same questions St. Albert hasn't yet answered. I am raising them not to suggest failure is inevitable, but because these communities would have benefited from the work St. Albert still has time to do.

Medicine Hat: When Alberta Cuts, the Shelter Closes

Medicine Hat is nationally recognized for its homelessness work. The Roots Youth Shelter, operated by McMan South, provided four beds for youth aged 12 to 17. It was operated by an experienced non-profit with years of provincial funding relationship behind it. The relevant question for St. Albert is not whether Medicine Hat got it wrong, but what the funding environment looks like for a facility that hasn't yet secured an operator or a grant.

In July 2025, the Alberta government cut the shelter's funding mid-budget year, cutting from approximately \$850,000 down to \$335,000, with no public explanation and no transition plan. The shelter served 51 young people in its final full fiscal year, with numbers rising every month. In just the first quarter of 2025-26, 37 youth accessed the shelter. ***It closed permanently on September 19, 2025.*** The executive director, Tracie Mutschler, said it plainly: "We had to really balance just the safety of the youth and the staff. Unfortunately, it just wasn't financially viable to continue." The next closest youth shelter is now in Lethbridge.

Medicine Hat had an experienced operator, established infrastructure, and years of provincial funding history. When Alberta changed course mid-year, none of that was enough to keep the shelter open. The question for St. Albert is: what is the contingency plan if provincial funding is reduced or withdrawn after this land has been permanently transferred?

Ottawa: The Community That Said "fait accompli"

In September 2023, the Shepherds of Good Hope proposed a fourth supportive housing building in Ottawa's Carlington neighbourhood, a street that already has three of their facilities. The Shepherds serve adults experiencing homelessness and addictions, a different population than what St. Albert is proposing, ***but the process lesson is directly applicable.*** The reaction at the public meeting was instructive. Residents showed up. They weren't against the mission. Several even acknowledged the existing buildings had worked. What they objected to was the process.

One long-time resident, Jacques Auger, said he was planning to leave the neighbourhood after 30 years, partly because of crime, rifled cars, and his wife not walking alone at night. Another resident, Colleen Taylor, supported the project in principle but put it plainly: "The engagement is coming late. It feels like

it's coming late to us when you come into our community and say, 'Oh, this is the building that we're planning on building.'"

The words 'done deal' and 'fait accompli' came up again and again. The city councillor noted the project was allowed under current zoning, so unlike St. Albert's situation, it didn't even require a hearing. Residents still felt blindsided. Their sense that the decision had been made before they were consulted was the problem, regardless of whether the project was good or not.

The words Ottawa residents used — 'fait accompli', 'done deal', 'engagement came too late' — are the same words coming from The Gardens today. That parallel is worth taking seriously. It suggests the concern is not about the project. It is about being part of the process.

British Columbia: When Operational Gaps Surface After Opening

In 2025, a coalition of BC non-profit supportive housing providers went public to ask the provincial government for regulatory changes that would help them run their buildings more safely. These are adult facilities, and the population is different from what St. Albert is proposing. But the lesson they surfaced is relevant regardless of who is being served: operational challenges in supportive housing are real, they require planning in advance, and they are harder to fix after a building opens than before.

The BC government responded by tabling new legislation in March 2026 to address the gaps operators had identified. The point is not that the BC facilities failed or that their operators didn't care. They did care. The point is that even experienced, well-intentioned operators identified gaps they hadn't fully anticipated. In St. Albert's case, there is no operator yet, no staffing plan, no safety protocol, and no governance model. The question worth asking is: what does that framework look like, and when will it be developed relative to the land decision?

Moncton: What Happens When the Community Isn't Consulted

In September 2025, Moncton Council voted 7-3 to reject a rezoning application for a four-bedroom youth stabilization home serving ages 12 to 18 — a close comparator to what is proposed here. The organization, Youth Impact Jeunesse, had genuine intentions and a track record of running youth programs. More than 260 residents signed a petition and 69 written objections were filed before the public hearing. The residents who spoke weren't opposed to the mission. They were opposed to being blindsided. One resident put it simply: "I'm not against a group home. It's how they're going about it. We wouldn't have been in such an uproar if we had been consulted about it in the right way."

The project didn't proceed, not because the community opposed helping youth, but because trust hadn't been built before the ask was made. The organization had to sell the property and start over. The community felt unheard. And the young people who would have been served had to wait longer. Nobody won. That is what happens when a good-intentioned project skips the engagement step. St. Albert still has time to avoid that outcome.

Saskatoon: Planning the Site Before Opening It

A 2024 Saskatoon Police Service report reviewing shelter facility operations noted that integrated service planning from the outset — **including Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design** — made a measurable difference in how smoothly facilities operated within their surrounding neighbourhoods. The report looked at adult shelter facilities, not youth-specific ones, and the findings are not directly transferable. But the underlying principle applies broadly: the design of the site, its relationship to the surrounding environment, and the service plan need to be worked out before a facility opens, not after. No CPTED assessment has been produced for this site, and no site design exists.

Each of these communities had good intentions. The people leading these projects wanted to help. That is not in question here either. What these examples show is that wanting to help and being prepared to do it well are two different things — and that the gap between them creates real harm: for residents who feel blindsided, for organizations that have to start over, for operators who can't keep staff safe, and ultimately for the vulnerable people the facility was meant to serve. St. Albert still has time to close that gap before the land changes hands.

Questions for Council:

- Has Administration reviewed the experiences in Medicine Hat, Ottawa, British Columbia, Moncton, and Saskatoon?
 - What specific commitments on funding continuity, operational staffing, and safety protocols will be in place before the land changes hands?
 - Has a CPTED assessment been commissioned for this site?
 - **Does passing this bylaw on March 17 — before the required assessments are complete and before the community has been meaningfully engaged — reflect the stewardship that residents are entitled to expect when public land is permanently reclassified?**
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7. Why March 10 and March 17 Are Connected

March 17 has been described as a land use matter separate from the housing project. It is worth explaining why residents see them as connected, and why that connection matters for what Council is being asked to decide.

The feasibility study recommended this site on the assumption that the MR designation would be removed. That recommendation was accepted in June 2025 and the bylaw was directed to follow. The project selected the site; the bylaw followed. That sequence is in the public record. The bylaw exists because of the housing project decision, and the housing project chose this site because the bylaw would make it available. Anyone reading the chronology connects those dots.

It is worth asking: outside of the MR designation, is there any mechanism that would require the City to hold a public hearing before this land changes hands? If the answer is no, then the MR designation is doing more than a zoning function. It is the only formal opportunity the public has to be heard before this parcel is committed. Once that designation is removed, there is no obligation for further consultation.

That is why the questions on March 10, about the feasibility study, site suitability, and community engagement, matter for the vote on March 17. The MR designation is the public's only formal protection over this parcel. The case for removing it should rest on a solid plan, an identified operator, confirmed funding, and genuine community engagement. The question is whether that work has been done.

Questions for Council:

- Has an operator been identified and confirmed in writing?
 - Has written provincial funding confirmation been received, including amount, duration, and conditions?
 - Have the required noise impact and sensitive land use assessments been completed?
 - **If this foundational work has not been done, is removing the public's only formal protection on this parcel the right next step?**
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8. A Request to Finish the Work First

I am going to close by acknowledging something.

The passion behind this initiative is real. Members of this Council and the Council before it have championed this cause, and that commitment to vulnerable young people is genuine. The groundwork laid over the past several years reflects real care. That care is the reason this has come as far as it has.

But caring deeply about a problem is not the same as having solved it. And the young people this facility is meant to help deserve more than a facility that opens without a plan, without community buy-in, without a confirmed operator, without funding certainty, and on a site that was chosen in part because of a measurement error.

They deserve a facility that works. And that means building it the right way.

This is a new Council. A new Mayor. Most of you were not part of the decisions made in the final months of the previous term. You have both the right and the responsibility to look at this with fresh eyes, to ask the questions that weren't asked, to insist on the engagement that didn't happen, and to be confident that what you're voting for is built on solid ground.

I am asking Council to require the following before any land decision proceeds:

1. Complete the business plan the 2020 Task Force prescribed: a named operator, confirmed funding, governance structure, and program design. Make it public.
2. Correct the feasibility study's site scoring using the actual parcel area. Release the revised analysis. Explain on the record why Mission Avenue, with an identical score and no parkland removal required, was not selected.
3. Commission the Noise Impact Assessment required by the City's own Municipal Engineering Standards, and apply the Sensitive Land Use assessment standard that the 2024 Land Use Bylaw demands for this type of facility.
4. Obtain written provincial funding confirmation, including amount, duration, and conditions, before making an irreversible land decision.
5. Conduct real community engagement: conversations with adjacent residents, Kids & Company, the Lions Club, Amacon Properties, trail users, and seniors who use Lions Park. Not after the land is gone. Before.
6. Review the prevention-based models operating in Leduc, Airdrie, Strathcona County, and Stony Plain, and make a deliberate case for why a purpose-built facility is the right model for St. Albert at this scale.

Come back with a plan. Engage the community genuinely. Answer the questions. Then ask for the land.

Respectfully,

Jeremiah - Resident, The Gardens

Renee McDonald

From: Joanne Ellis [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 12:06 AM
To: Legislative
Subject: Land Donation - Objection

Categories: [REDACTED]

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

To the members of City Council:

I am sending this e-mail to object the donation of the Public land in St. Albert to a Homeless Housing Initiative.

As a resident of St. Albert for 49 years I feel that the city hasn't given the citizen's an opportunity to be heard and to give much needed input on how this affects our community.

I, Joanne Ellis, vote No!

--

Joanne Ellis

[REDACTED]
St. Albert, AB
[REDACTED]

You make your own happiness!

Renee McDonald

From: Natalie Ritosa [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 11:28 AM
To: Hearings
Subject: 18 Sir Winston Churchill Public Hearing Feedback

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

St. Albert City Council,

My name is Natalie Ritosa and I am a resident of The Gardens/Grandin neighbourhood, living adjacent to the parcel located at 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue that is proposed to have its MR designation removed. Unfortunately I am not able to attend the Public Hearing on March 17, but I wanted to state my opposition to the current resolution to remove the MR designation - at this time.

This email is not about youth transitional housing, but about transparency and open and honest process. As you can imagine, many residents living near the parcel and in the larger Gardens community were caught off guard by the recent Gazette article regarding the proposed facility which falsely stated that "in June 2025, the previous council approved a youth transitional housing facility at 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue".

On March 10, 2026, I attended the Standing Committee of the Whole Meeting in which Mayor Olivieri stated that the topic of removing the MR designation from the parcel has been in discussion since 2022, predating the Youth Transitional Housing Feasibility Study's proposal of the 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue location.

While this is not untrue, in May 2022, following a presentation regarding potential land use options of the old Firehall 1 site prior to its demolition (AR-22-174: Fire Hall #1 Options), council motioned a Public Hearing for the removal of the MR, scheduled for September 2022. However, during the August 29, 2022 City Council Meeting, this portion of the motion was rescinded because "essentially, we're just going to take some more time to figure out what we're doing with Fire Hall #1".

As far as I can tell, more time was not taken and the options were never revisited. The next mention of the removal of the MR designation was in 2025, directly in relation to the Youth Transitional Housing facility.

During the Standing Committee of the Whole Meeting on March 10, 2026, we were continuously told that the MR removal has absolutely no connection to the facility. If this is the case, why is this issue being heard now, in the peak of the contentious discussion regarding transitional housing at this location?

Additionally, the Public Hearing Agenda Report notes that this hearings alignment to Council Direction is based on AR-25-200, which states that the MR is being removed to "enable the land to be donated or sold at a nominal fee to facilitate the developing and operation of Youth Transitional Housing in St. Albert." Why is there mention of this specific land use if we're being told it's not related to it? There was no mention of this in the Public Notice in the Gazette.

On March 10, when Councillor Neil Korotash suggested postponing or rescheduling the Public Hearing, I felt that our concerns were being heard. However, the rest of City Council did not agree. Why are we rushing to remove the MR now when it was postponed in 2022 to revisit the options with the site? There was no rush in 2022. Has anything been proposed for this site since 2022 other than the housing facility? Defeating this resolution would bring residents peace of mind, and allow time for additional options for the site to be drafted and considered.

Thank you for your time, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide my feedback.

Sincerely,
Natalie Ritosa

Renee McDonald

From: Diane Gauvreau [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 2:26 PM
To: legislativ@stalbert.ca; Hearings; Mayor Scott Olivieri; Sheena Hughes; Shelley Biermanski; Sandy Clark; Ken MacKay; Amanda Patrick; Neil Korotash
Subject: Concerns regarding youth homeless shelter in Gardens

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

Dear St. Albert Council Members

I am emailing you regarding my concern with the proposed plan to turn the old Grandin Fire Hall into a youth shelter.

Specifically:

1. There was no consultation:

- Not one adjacent homeowner, neighbour, or business was formally consulted on what this land should become. A community debate was publicly promised in 2022. It never happened

2. No Plan:

- No identified operator. No building design and no confirmed provincial funding. No safety assessment.

3. Funding is Uncertain but th the land transfer is not:

- In July 2025, the Province cut funding for a comparable Medicine sHat youth shelter mid-year but it closed permanently 2 months later. If the funding disappears, the land is still gone

My concerns for my community include:

- Kids land company and playgrounds near by
- Lions Park, Grenadier Park and Trail Users has a potential to be taken over by alcohol and drug users and potential violence (don't believe me...just ask Edmonton City council regarding their downtown parks and recreational playgrounds)
- Has the senior centre, the Lions club, St. Albert Farmers market close by residents been consulted and engaged?
- Can you ensure that the Gardens Community residents will be safe with minimal crime with this shelter in place?

Thank you for the opportunity to voice and share my concerns with you.

Kind Regards,
Diane Gauvreau


St. Albert