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Information Item Only

Youth Transitional Housing Project Update

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SUMMARY

Administration is presenting an update on the progress of the Youth Transitional Housing project.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

On June 10, 2025, Standing Committee of the Whole passed the following motion:

AR-25-200

“That Administration bring forward a bylaw for Council’s consideration to remove the municipal reserve designation for 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue, in order to enable the land be donated or sold for a nominal fee to facilitate the development and operation of Youth Transitional Housing in St. Albert”.

On September 10, 2024, Standing Committee of the Whole passed the following motion:

AR-24-376

“That Administration investigate interest from operators or partners for the provision of Youth Transitional Housing and provide an update to Standing Committee of the Whole no later than Q2 2025”.

On August 17, 2020, Council passed the following motion:

CB-20-053

“That a Capital Project Charter, along with future operating impacts, be developed and added to the 2021-2030 Growth Capital Plan to be considered as part of the 2021 budget process for the construction and operation of a new youth transitional home, using an advocacy model, as per the Mayor’s Task Force to End Homelessness recommendations”.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

This report provides an update on the Youth Transitional Housing project and the steps required to advance the initiative with a focus on addressing youth homelessness in St. Albert.

Youth homelessness refers to the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers but lack the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence. It is often described as “hidden homelessness” since the need is not necessarily visible or easily measured.

Establishing the need for youth transitional housing is complex. In the absence of safe and accessible housing options, youth may remain in unsafe homes, couch surf, or feel forced to relocate to Edmonton. Leaving the community can increase their exposure to higher-risk environments, disconnect them from familiar supports, and result in challenges they may bring back with them.

Youth Transitional Housing provides a safe, supportive, and resourced environment where youth can overcome trauma, address the issues that led to homelessness, rebuild their support network, learn essential life skills and participate in structured activities including school and employment, this model is commonly referred to as a “youth hub”.

A “youth hub,” or youth support center, provides integrated youth services in a trauma-informed manner. Its purpose is to offer a local access point for health services, housing, and other social supports close to where youth already have natural support and connections.

Mayor’s Task Force to End Homelessness

The Mayor’s Task Force to End Homelessness (attachment 1) was created in 2018 in response to the rise in homelessness in St. Albert. After reviewing the needs of four vulnerable groups, specifically women and families fleeing violence, newcomers, seniors, and youth, the Task Force found that youth had the fewest resources in St. Albert and faced the greatest barriers to stable housing. Because St. Albert has no dedicated housing options for homeless or at risk youth, the Task Force recommended that addressing youth homelessness be the city’s priority. The Task Force also noted that early intervention with youth is more effective compared to addressing chronic homelessness later in life. Transitional housing was identified as a key strategy to stabilize and support youth who are unstably housed.

Youth Transitional Housing Feasibility Study

In June 2023, the City of St. Albert engaged CitySpaces Consulting and Covenant House Vancouver to complete a Youth Transitional Housing Feasibility Study (attachment 2). Building on the 2018 Mayor’s Task Force to End Homelessness report, the study confirmed the need for youth transitional housing, evaluated potential development and operational models, and outlined specific actions to advance the project.

As part of the study, the consultants evaluated potential locations based on factors such as accessibility to essential services, community integration, transportation, safety, zoning compliance, and cost feasibility. Additionally, considerations included the site's environmental safety, availability of

infrastructure, and potential for future expansion to ensure long-term viability.

Through this process, Administration identified numerous City-owned parcels as potential sites. The consultants assessed these locations and narrowed them to three viable options for further consideration.

Each of the three sites was evaluated based on parcel size, proximity to downtown, access to education and employment opportunities, and the availability of transit. The three options were:

- **13 Mission Avenue:** This site is a serviced parcel of land that previously housed an administrative building.
- **70 Boudreau Road:** This parcel of land is not currently connected to municipal utilities. Significant infrastructure investment and redistricting would be required before any new development could proceed.
- **16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue:** This site was thought to offer the lowest potential return to the city.

Request for Interest: Youth Transitional Housing Operators

On September 10, 2024, Administration presented a report to Standing Committee of the Whole, recommending that a Request for Interest (RFI) be issued to identify potential operators or partners for Youth Transitional Housing in St. Albert.

The RFI proceeded and generated interest from nine operators, with two submitting formal submissions. Both organizations participated in interviews to clarify what supports they would require from the city to move forward with a Request for Proposal.

Through the RFI process:

- nine operators expressed interest.
- two submitted complete responses; and
- All indicated the need for land acquisition and/or ongoing operational support from the city.

Next Steps, After RFI

In June 2025 an update was provided to Council, following the completion of the RFI process to identify interested operators. Administration confirmed 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue as the preferred site for Youth Transitional Housing. The subdivided parcel size limits opportunities for larger scale development, making it well-suited for a smaller, supportive housing project.

During discussion on land options, it was noted that support for the initiative could be strengthened by donating the parcel or selling it for a nominal fee. This approach would remove a significant financial barrier for potential operators, demonstrate the City's leadership in addressing youth homelessness, and enhance partners' ability to secure additional external funding.

A donation or nominal fee sale would be recorded as a loss on the City's year-end consolidated financial statements. The site's most recent assessed value is \$541,000, based on current zoning, Public, Private, and Institutional Service. The current value may be included as the city's equivalent to a monetary contribution to the project.

Following the demolition of Firehall 1, prior to subdivision, the parcel was initially estimated at 1.2 acres and the development community expressed interest based on that size. However, the parcel of land included a lift station, resulting in the two lots getting subdivided and registered separately. This reduced the size of 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue to 0.41 acres, resulting in diminishing developer interest.

On June 10th, 2025, City Council moved "That Administration bring forward a bylaw for Council's consideration to remove the municipal reserve designation for 16 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue, to enable the land to be donated or sold for a nominal fee to facilitate the developing and operation of Youth Transitional Housing in St. Albert.

Current State

A Public hearing date is scheduled for March 17, 2026, proposing a bylaw to remove the Municipal Reserve (MR) designation on 16 Sir Winston Churchill Ave.

MR removal is the formal process of eliminating a public use designation such as parks, schools, or recreation areas, so the land can be sold, leased or redeveloped. This process requires public hearing, Council approval and must follow the requirements of Section 674 of the Municipal Government Act. The property is zoned as PPI - Public, Private and Institutional Service.

The next step in advancing the Youth Transitional Housing project is to issue a Request for Proposal to select an operator and subsequently return to Council to seek approval for the land donation.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

Community Social Needs Assessment

In 2023 and 2024, the City's Community Services department completed a comprehensive Community Social Needs Assessment (CSNA) to identify emerging social issues, trends, and needs within the community.

The community needs assessment reflects the collective perspectives of more than 1600 community members and 90 service providers. These service providers include agencies such as the Community Village & Food Bank, the Family Resource Centre, and the St. Albert Stop Abuse in Families Society, as well as community organizations like Probation, Child & Family Services, and Alberta Mental Health. Service providers identified youth as one of the most underserved groups in St. Albert and identified mental health, domestic violence, food security, suicide, poverty and discrimination as issues being in crisis. A total of 259 youth completed the survey, with many identifying housing affordability as a key issue to address.

Overall, 80% of CSNA respondents ranked homelessness and housing insecurity, housing with supportive services, and housing affordability as very important and in a crisis or emergency state.

Youth Transitional Housing Feasibility Study

CitySpaces Consulting and Covenant Health Vancouver Team conducted key informant interviews with 24 professionals working in youth services and the health and housing sector, facilitating two youth focus groups to learn directly from youth about their experiences, needs and recommended solutions and completed site visits to youth housing facilities across the Edmonton Region. Feedback consistently revealed that St. Albert youth are often required to leave the community and travel to Edmonton for emergency shelter, underscoring the absence of local supports for young people in crisis.

Participants estimated that 20-30 students per school are regularly couch surfing, indicating significant hidden homelessness. They also reported escalating concerns related to mental health trauma, substance use, sexual assault, increased violence toward youth, and rising family instability.

These findings align with pan-Canadian research showing that youth who are displaced into larger urban centers face heightened risks of exploitation, victimization, and long term disconnection from supports. Together, the local and national evidence highlight a critical opportunity for St. Albert to provide early intervention, community-based housing and support services that keep youth close to their families, schools, and natural support networks, to promote greater safety, stability, and healthier developmental outcomes.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority Three: Community Well-Being

Respond to changing demographics, accommodate the diverse needs of residents and continue to foster an inclusive community where everyone has an opportunity to fully participate and feel welcomed. This includes communicating and engaging in meaningful and transparent ways with the community.

Strategies:

- Support development of mixed housing choices including market, attainable and transitional housing types. This strategy includes advancing development on 22 St. Thomas Street and youth transitional housing.

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

G.10 Strategic and Business Planning

G.10.1 Corporate Alignment and Planning.

The City plans according to the City of St. Albert Strategic Framework policy (CCG-06) to align the City's short, medium and long-term operational efforts to the Community Vision and Pillars of

Sustainability and the City of St. Albert Council's Strategic Plan.
Community Vision and Pillars of Sustainability showcase the way the community envisions the city in the long term. It guides the long-term sustainability of the community in Council Policy (C-CG-11)

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