

Provincial Approach to Homelessness - Timeframe for Emergency Residential Shelter – 210 Pacific Avenue

ISSUE

On October 6, 2023, the Province of Saskatchewan (the Province) announced a strategy to combat homelessness, including the addition of 60 new permanent shelter spaces in Saskatoon. Additionally, the Province would create two complex needs shelters (one in Regina and one in Saskatoon) that will provide secure and medically supervised facilities for up to 24 hours. Further, the Province committed to work with municipalities to mitigate community safety issues around shelters and will continue to expand delivery of homelessness outreach services.

At that time, the Province requested that the City of Saskatoon (City) take the lead role in identifying sites for new facilities for those experiencing homelessness in Saskatoon. Administration continues to work to locate a permanent location for a shelter, and is in the final due diligence stages for a potential site. The permanent site being evaluated would require a new build, therefore a temporary solution was pursued. The Administration is recommending the City-owned site at 210 Pacific Avenue be used as a temporary location, for up to 18 months.

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council authorize:

1. Administration to issue the development permit for 210 Pacific Avenue for the purpose of providing an Emergency Residential Shelter as a temporary use for up to 18 months, as outlined in this report;
2. That the City of Saskatoon enter into a lease agreement with the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, for 210 Pacific Avenue, for the purpose of providing a temporary Emergency Residential Shelter, based on the terms outlined in this report;
3. That a Capital Project be established, for up to \$250,000, for the required upgrades/renovations, for 210 Pacific Avenue, with the funding to be provided by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation;
4. That the City Solicitor be requested to prepare the appropriate agreements and that His Worship the Mayor and the City Clerk be authorized to execute the agreements under the Corporate Seal; and
5. That all proper officers of the City of Saskatoon take the appropriate action to carry the noted changes into effect.

BACKGROUND

The Governance and Priorities Committee, at its [meeting](#) held on October 11, 2023, considered a report titled Proposed Roles and Next Steps for the City Regarding Shelters for People Experiencing Homelessness.

The report outlined the Province's request that the City take the lead role in identifying sites for shelters in Saskatoon. It advised the likely scenario was that the City would need to identify two new shelter locations, each with room for approximately 30 individuals. Although permanent locations would be ideal, temporary locations would also be considered until permanent locations could be found.

City Council, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) held on February 28, 2024, resolved:

“That the following criteria be added to those approved by the Governance & Priorities Committee on October 11, 2023, which are being used by the Administration to evaluate and select sites for future shelters to be operated by the Province of Saskatchewan:

- At least 250 metres from an elementary school in the Saskatoon Public School or Greater Saskatoon Catholic School system.”

In addition, City Council requested:

“Would the administration report back on a potential definition for “shelters” using criteria based on current day operations of the 6 overnight shelters currently providing services in Saskatoon.

That the Administration report back on maintaining and clarifying the existing distributed approach to siting.”

City Council, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) held May 29, 2024, received a [report](#) titled Update on Shelter Approach and Next Steps, which noted:

“Given the challenges in identifying potential sites, the Province and the Administration discussed the possibility of a single 60-bed facility, rather than two 30-bed facilities. Both the Province and the Administration are supportive of this approach, provided a suitable site can be identified and the appropriate operating conditions are in place.”

Administration has continued to work closely with representatives from Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) throughout this process.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Approach to Siting and Distribution

Administration has, to date, investigated site options throughout the entire city, with no areas being excluded from initial consideration. Sites, with or without a suitable building, have been identified by Administration or in some cases brought forward by commercial realtors or property owners in many areas of the city. Zoning was also a consideration, and all available sites that were currently appropriately zoned, or could be reasonably rezoned,

were considered. Additional discussion of the approach, as requested by City Council, is provided (see Appendix 1).

210 Pacific Avenue Recommended as a Temporary Site

Following an active search for suitable locations, the City-owned site located at 210 Pacific Avenue is recommended as a temporary Emergency Residential Shelter and has been supported by SHC. The site was formerly operated as a parcel shipping location behind the former Saskatchewan Transportation Company bus depot. Since acquiring the property in 2022, as part of land assembly in the downtown, the building has been used primarily for civic storage.

210 Pacific Avenue is zoned MX2 – Downtown Warehouse Mixed Use District. As per Section 5.56 – Emergency Residential Shelters of [Bylaw No. 8770, Zoning Bylaw, 2009](#) (Zoning Bylaw), a site zoned MX2 is eligible to be considered for the location of an Emergency Residential Shelter.

The site meets the following criteria:

- Space for beds in an open shelter-type hall (with movable wall systems or partitions);
- Internal and external Gathering spaces (amenity spaces) available on site;
- Site is in proximity to other services;
- Zoned appropriately under the City’s Emergency Residential Shelter zoning provisions; and
- At least 250 meters from an elementary school in the Saskatoon Public School or Greater Saskatoon Catholic School system.

Through renovations, the building and site are expected to be able to accommodate the remaining criteria, including the need for:

- Some private rooms (accessed internally)
- An area suitable for office space for site staff; and
- Showers, bathrooms and kitchen facilities.

Following review, the building is seen as suitable to accommodate up to 30-40 beds. Although this will not meet the goal of providing space for 60 beds, the building will assist in meeting a portion of the need for the upcoming winter.

Administration and the representatives from SHC are in agreement to proceed with this site, subject to the required approvals. SHC has formally endorsed the site, subject to City Council approval.

Proposed Application

SHC has applied for a temporary Emergency Residential Shelter at this location, for between 30 to 40 beds, for a period up to 18 months. The location will be operated by a

service provider, under contract to SHC. The provider has been identified as the Mustard Seed.

Lease Agreement

SHC and Administration have agreed upon the terms of a lease agreement for the property. Notable terms of the agreement to include:

- The leased area (see Appendix 2), includes the 5,926 sf building and 6,720sf of outdoor space to be used for parking and building access;
- Non-market nominal rent of \$1 per month;
- 24 months lease term commencing October 1, 2024 and ending September 30, 2026. Lease term includes 1-2 months for initial fit-up of building and several months for move out of building at the end of the Council approved operating term;
- SHC to pay all utilities and occupancy costs and/or maintenance replacements not considered to be of a significant capital nature;
- SHC able to sublet the premises to a third-party service provider to operate the shelter;
- SHC is required to ensure third-party service provider is operating the shelter in a responsible manner (provide 24-hour supervision and on site security, maintain adequate staffing, keep site area clean, etc.); and
- SHC third-party service provider required to carry general liability insurance in an amount not less than \$5,000,000.

Due to the proposed lease rate for the space being below market value without a public offering, public notice under [Bylaw No 8171 – The Public Notice Policy Bylaw, 2003](#) has been provided (see Appendix 3).

Renovation for Temporary Use

In collaboration with representatives from both SHC and the Mustard Seed, Administration is identifying the required modifications to make the building suitable for use as a temporary Emergency Residential Shelter. Preliminary investigations have identified the following improvements to the building which will be funded through a conditional capital grant of \$250,000 provided by SHC:

- Minor roof repair;
- Site fencing additions;
- Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning upgrades;
- Fire alarm and emergency exit upgrades; and
- Interior renovations, including but not limited to the addition of shower, washroom and limited kitchen/food service facilities.

The City's Facilities Department will handle project management of the required improvements to the property.

Approval Required - Term for Temporary Emergency Residential Shelter Operation

This application requires the use of the Emergency Residential Shelter provisions of the Zoning Bylaw for the facility to be set up and operational in the near term. Applications for Emergency Residential Shelters are handled administratively similar to how all other permitted uses are handled, with the exception that City Council approval is required for the length of time of operation. The provisions of the Zoning Bylaw only allow for a temporary Emergency Residential Shelter for a period of up to 18 months.

City Council can approve the recommended length of time or put forward a motion for an alternate time period between 1 and 18 months. However, given the renovations required, a short term approval would likely not result in a shelter being operated at this site by the province. The understanding between the Administration and SHC is that this site will function until a longer term facility is brought on stream, which is expected to be a purpose-built facility.

Should the recommendation included in this report be approved by City Council, the site will proceed in the immediate term to be established as a temporary Emergency Residential Shelter.

Transition to a Permanent Permitted Use is Not Planned for this Site

The zoning of the property at 210 Pacific Avenue would provide for the permanent establishment of a Special Care Home, which is the use applied by the City for a permanent shelter. However, this site is not planned to become permanent.

Administration continues to work with the province to find an appropriate permanent location for a new shelter facility, to become operational by the end of the 18-month term, for this temporary facility.

Definition of a Shelter

During discussion at City Council on February 28, 2024, it was requested that Administration create a definition to help assist in general understanding of the type of facility or operations commonly associated with shelters for those experiencing homelessness. As Administration has continued to seek appropriate sites and/or buildings for a new shelter location, the definition would be a description to guide Administration and communicate to members of the public.

Based on conversations with SHC, the new permanent shelter facilities to be established will continue to be considered “Special Care Home” under the Zoning Bylaw. The temporary Emergency Residential Shelter regulations are used to allow a temporary option up to 18 months, as needed in this case. Further details are provided (see Appendix 1).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Renovations up to \$250,000 to this property will be funded via a conditional grant from SHC. To initiate renovations on the property Administration is requesting City Council approval to create a capital project to fund the improvements prior to receiving the funding grant from

SHC. Any costs over and above \$250,000 will require further consideration by City Council and or discussion with SHC.

The City has and will continue to provide in kind contributions of staff time for the site selection, public information sessions, and building renovations to accommodate the temporary Emergency Residential Shelter.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Administration held two Neighbourhood Information Sessions on September 16, 2024. Direct mail notices were provided to businesses, residences and institutions within a 400m radius of the site. City representatives and representatives from the Mustard Seed were in attendance to provide information and answer questions.

At the time of writing of this report, the Administration continues to work with affected businesses, and is working on a series of changes and improvements to the facility and the City's operational plans, intended to alleviate some of the concerns heard at the public information sessions. A verbal update will be provided to Council when considering this report.

NEXT STEPS

Should Council approve the recommendations of this report, the City's Facilities Department will lead the required renovations for the temporary use, based on input from SHC and the Mustard Seed. Saskatoon Fire and Building Standards Departments will undertake a site inspection of the building to ensure necessary life safety requirements are in place prior to occupancy and work with the applicant to ensure any necessary work is undertaken and a Fire Safety Plan approved. Upon completion of any required work, a temporary occupancy and development permit would be issued. The issuance of these permits begins the 18-month operational time.

APPENDICES

1. Approach to Siting and Defining Shelters
2. Location Map – 210 Pacific Avenue
3. Public Notice – Lease of 210 Pacific Avenue

REPORT APPROVAL

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