

March 18, 2024

## **FAQ: Permanent Shelter**

Work related to siting and development of a permanent shelter in Red Deer continues with The City of Red Deer working alongside the Province of Alberta in its endeavour to site and build a permanent shelter in our city.

### **1. Why does Red Deer need a permanent shelter?**

The purpose-built permanent integrated emergency shelter will be designed to respond to the long-term social needs of our vulnerable population. Council has advocated for a housing-focused shelter model where a move to permanent accommodations is prioritized, helping to ensure shelter stays are brief, rare, and non-reoccurring.

Over the past decade, temporary emergency shelter solutions have been implemented but these have not been designed spaces to support service delivery to those who are facing homelessness and addictions. People in the social service sector have worked tirelessly to support those in need, but they need support to advocate and implement long-term strategies that will be mutually beneficial.

According to Red Deer's Point in Time (PIT) Count, held in the fall of 2022, the number of persons experiencing homelessness in the city increased to 334 in 2022 from 144 in 2018, confirming local outreach staff expectations that the number of people experiencing homelessness is increasing.

### **2. What does purpose-built mean?**

Purpose-built, in reference to the permanent shelter, refers to the design of the building and the spaces and amenities that are included. The design and build should meet the needs of those who will access the services offered, as well as supporting the surrounding neighbourhood and the community. The City and the province will work with the community to identify the necessary components of the build, ensuring its success as part of a continuum of social support services offered in Red Deer.

### **3. What does integrated mean in relation to a permanent shelter?**

When The City refers to a future permanent shelter as being "integrated", it means the facility will include a variety of services to help the immediate needs of our vulnerable population, including a primary focus on their journey to obtaining and retaining permanent housing. Services that support an individual's immediate needs can include items like food, laundry, a safe place to sleep, and medical services. Other services that may be considered in the permanent shelter include services like addiction and mental health support, help in obtaining identification, support in obtaining income, among other services. Some services may be permanent fixtures in the shelter, while others may be temporary or satellite offices.

### **4. What is The City's role in the shelter project?**

This is a provincial project; however, The City of Red Deer has been a partner in the site selection process with the Province of Alberta looking to us to recommend a site that we believe works for our community. The Province of Alberta has ultimate authority over decisions related to the permanent shelter, with The City of Red Deer's authority and formal responsibility limited to zoning and/or permitting for a future site.

### **5. Has a site been selected for the future permanent shelter in Red Deer?**

No. At this time, a site for the future permanent shelter is not selected as the four sites put forward by The City of Red Deer to the Province of Alberta have not moved forward due to a variety of factors including, but not limited to financial constraints. The size of the site, servicing and environmental considerations are all factors that have contributed to the site being cost prohibitive.

### **6. Why not? And what sites were put forward?**

Over 130 sites were considered by The City of Red Deer for a permanent shelter, with four formally put forward to the Province of Alberta for consideration.

- The first site considered by City Council was located in Railyards (downtown). Following targeted input sessions, City Council decided not to proceed with the site as it did not align with community needs and values. It was removed as a site option.

- The second site recommended by City Council was located at the north end of Red Deer and was not supported by the province due to concerns related to compatibility with nearby amenities.
- The third site, located in south Red Deer, was unanimously supported by City Council on October 11, 2023, followed by support from the province; however, land negotiations failed.
- The fourth site put forward was located in northeast Red Deer. It was initially supported by the province; however, City Council has now ceased negotiations as it is cost prohibitive.

**7. Why won't The City release the addresses of the recommended sites?**

There are many factors to consider in releasing addresses of the considered sites. Not all of the sites being considered are municipally or provincially owned, and The City of Red Deer and Province of Alberta are committed to not only protecting the integrity of the negotiation process in advance of securing a site, but also want to respect the privacy of private property/landowners who may choose to enter into negotiations with the province about a potential site.

**8. When will another site be chosen?**

We do not know. City Council is committed to moving forward as quickly as possible, but there are many factors at play. More information will be shared following a meeting with the Province of Alberta that is expected to take place in the coming weeks.

**9. How much will the future permanent shelter cost, what funding is currently in place and who is funding the project?**

We do not yet know what the full cost of a permanent shelter might be. It is a provincially funded project with the province committing \$7 million towards the purpose-built integrated shelter in Red Deer. This occurred initially in March 2018 with the newly elected government recommitting these funds in November 2020.

**10. How did City Council decide what sites to recommend to the Province of Alberta?**

City Council set its policy direction through the development of some site criteria to help guide the site selection process. The criteria includes:

- Ability to acquire site
- Adequate size
- Broad community impact
- Impacts to surrounding area
- Accesses to services and supports

**11. Has The City consulted the public about the permanent shelter?**

Yes. The City consulted citizens and stakeholders along the way, through the following mechanisms:

- In February 2022, The City hosted seven targeted meetings with a third-party engagement specialist to develop an understanding about downtown property owners, businesses, associations, and service providers to provide feedback on process and a particular site, that was proposed.
- In May and June 2022, The City hosted online and in person input opportunities with more than 900 participants.
- City Council continues to evaluate and assess informal comments and contributions from citizens and stakeholders about the permanent shelter.

**12. Will there be future opportunities for engagement and consultation with the community?**

When a future site is selected, it may require a public hearing if it is not appropriately/already zoned for shelter use; however, we do not yet know where a shelter may be located and therefore, we do not yet know what the formal consultation process may look like. The City expects the Province of Alberta will consult citizens and stakeholders in the development and construction of a permanent shelter in Red Deer.

**13. Why are many of the conversation about shelter being had in closed meetings of Council?**

Unfortunately, closed meetings of council have been necessary throughout this process as we worked to protect the integrity of the negotiation process and moved through site selection options. At the end of the day, there were more than 130 addresses considered with some of these sites being municipally and

provincially owned while others are privately owned.

City Council directed administration to leave no stone unturned, which meant an exhaustive and iterative process before property/landowners would ever be engaged. It would be unreasonable to expect administration to reach out to all private property/landowners in advance of City Council's review process.

Closed meetings were necessary to protect the interests and privacy of property/landowners on the list of potentially considered sites, to protect the integrity of the negotiating process, and to ensure administration and City Council could be thorough in its review and analysis before ever coming back out to the public.