



City of Prince Albert

RPT 2025-106

TITLE: Enhanced Emergency Shelter Consultation Results

DATE: March 3, 2025

TO: Executive Committee

PUBLIC: X

INCAMERA:

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Administration prepare a report for the April 7th City Council meeting for the formal consideration of a Homeless Shelter location; and,
2. That prior to April 7th, Administration proceed with a public meeting where the results of the 4 homeless shelter consultation meetings and associated survey will be presented.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Government of Saskatchewan has allocated funds to the YWCA to build on or renovate a property for a permanent, 24-hour enhanced emergency shelter. This will provide a new location for Stepping Stones, currently located at the Prince Albert Exhibition Grounds, which is not a viable long-term location. The shelter will offer comprehensive services, including case planning, wellness and cultural support, financial assistance, and help transitioning to appropriate housing.

Rather than pre-approve locations without public consultation, The City of Prince Albert has opted for a different strategy. Throughout January, four (4) public consultation sessions were held. The result was a list of eleven recurring themes that informed the development of a survey, which received 1650 responses. The data from the surveys

then informed a scoring matrix to determine the most suitable locations for further consultation.

Based on the feedback sessions and the survey responses, potential City owned lands or property that is currently for sale, that would be suitable for an enhanced emergency shelter were identified. Based on the scoring matrix, a site located at 11 – 15th Street East is the most suitable City owned location.

BACKGROUND:

For several years, housing providers, The Province, and members of City Administration have explored potential locations for a permanent emergency shelter.

Since March 2024, Administration has been part of a working group with the YWCA and The Province to explore potential sites for the shelter. This group has also focused on community communication to raise awareness and gather informal feedback. This is a timeline of their activities:

- On April 2, 2024, the Government of Saskatchewan wrote to the Mayors Office to formally request that the City of Prince Albert endorse a permanent location for the placement of an enhanced emergency shelter.
- In April 2024, the YWCA identified 1525 5th Avenue East as a possible location.
- On April 17, 2024, Administration met with local business owners to gather informal feedback. The property owners appreciated the approach but raised significant concerns about the location. Due to strong opposition from the business community, the YWCA decided this location was not viable.
- In May 2024, the City and the YWCA issued a joint media release to explore property and land options.
- Administration also explored City-owned land suitable for a new build and solicited feedback from internal departments on its viability.
- In July 2024, the YWCA met with members of the Prince Albert Business Improvement District (PADBID) to discuss the potential of establishing a shelter downtown.
- In July 2024, a letter from the PADBID Executive Director was circulated to downtown businesses, voicing concerns about a downtown location.
- In July 2024, Administration met with several downtown businesses who also raised significant concerns about the concentration of services already provided downtown and the social issues that they already experience.

- Concurrently, the YWCA launched a "YIMBY" (Yes In My Back Yard) campaign and hosted two luncheons to gather feedback from community partners.
- On September 13, 2024, the YWCA submitted a development Permit Application for a shelter for 420, 18th Street West. The application was not considered by Council as it did not receive a second. Feedback from the consultation on this location was against a location close to a residential area and that downtown should not have been discounted.
- There are mounting concerns from the Prince Albert Exhibition Board, the YWCA, The Province, and Public Health regarding the long-term solution for a shelter. The current location was meant to be temporary and has been so since 2020, and there are increasing public health concerns. This in turn places increased urgency on finding an alternative location.
- On November 29, an Interagency Committee on Homelessness met at Prince Albert Grand Council Urban Services and a motion was unanimously passed to support a collaborative effort involving PAGC, the City of Prince Albert, YWCA, the Métis Nation, and the Government of Saskatchewan in creating and supporting a permanent site for a homeless shelter. The motion was introduced by Grand Chief Brian Hardlotte.
- City Council Resolution No. 0370 dated December 16, 2024, was carried unanimously:

"That Administration engage with residents across The City to raise awareness and collect feedback for consideration on the establishment of a permanent shelter."

There are mounting concerns from the Prince Albert Exhibition Board, the YWCA, The Province, and Public Health regarding the long-term solution for a shelter. The current location was meant to be temporary and has been so since 2020, and there are significant and increasing public health concerns. This in turn places increased urgency on finding an alternative location.

The recommendation in this report follows the assimilation of qualitative (descriptive) data from the consultation sessions with quantitative (metrics) data from the survey to guide decision making to find a location for an enhanced emergency shelter. This informed a matrix approach to score locations.

PROPOSED APPROACH AND RATIONALE:

Four (4) public consultation sessions were held across the city throughout January (January 15, 20, 21, and 30), across three different locations. The sessions were very well attended. Administration estimates 500 people attended the sessions, with

approximately 300 different individuals attending overall. A survey was available for community members to complete online from January 29 – February 5.

Methodology

Combining qualitative and quantitative information for decision-making provides a more complete, accurate, and balanced perspective. During the in-person consultation meetings, attendees were asked to fill out feedback forms. The intent behind this was to collect open-ended, qualitative information of the opinions and ideas that the residents of Prince Albert have regarding the relocation of the emergency shelter. These forms were collected and analyzed for thematic content.

This type of data collection and analysis is useful for collecting general feedback and finding out what issues are and are not priorities for the city's residents. However, it is restricted by the fact that only a limited number of people could attend the meetings and that there was no way to control for people submitting their opinions multiple times over the course of the in-person consultation sessions because they were anonymous. As such, a quantitative approach was used to determine City-wide opinion on these topics. To do this, a survey was created using the themes discovered at the consultation meetings as the basis for the questions that were developed. Overall, there were 1650 surveys completed by the public. Of those, 129 were completed by people who chose the "Outside of the City" option for the "Which area of the city do you live in?" question. These results were excluded from the overall count which left a sample size of 1521 valid survey results. Based on a City population size of 37,500 this survey sample grants a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

A margin of error is a statistical measure that indicates how much uncertainty is present in survey results or estimates. It represents the range within which the true value is expected to fall, considering possible sampling errors. This means that the survey results could vary by plus or minus 2.5% from the true value in the full population. It means that if the survey were repeated 20 times, the results would fall within the margin of error in 19 of those times (or 95% of the time). Typically, a margin of error of 5% or less is considered optimal.

Consultation Feedback

All qualitative information received by The City in relation to the Emergency Shelter was reviewed as part of this process. This included written feedback from the consultation sessions that took place in January 2025, correspondence sent to The City on the issue during this time, and correspondence submitted in the last 12-months (particularly in advance of the October 7, 2024, and December 16, 2024, council meetings). There were over 150 written feedback forms from the consultation sessions, approximately 100 letters submitted ahead of the two council meetings mentioned above, and more than 30 emails received by Administration relating to the issue of an emergency shelter location.

The result was a list of eleven (11) recurring themes:

1. Security
2. Accessibility
3. Pro-Specific Location
4. Anti-Specific Location
5. General Location Comments
6. Shelter Transparency
7. Interior Services and Amenities at the Shelter
8. Exterior Services and Amenities to the Shelter
9. Shelter Alternatives
10. Citywide Changes
11. Urgency

Security - themes associated with security included concerns about needing security, feedback that the current security approach is good, that residents of the shelter and surrounding area need to feel safe, and security concerns generally associated with the issue of homelessness.

Accessibility - themes associated with accessibility included the relevance of service proximity, both for and against, the relevance/importance of transport access, and the need to consider people who have a physical disability.

Pro-Specific Location- feedback was provided in favour of specific locations. There was significant feedback in favour of a central location, a location 'close to services' and a focus on 15th Street. Multiple locations were also mentioned. Locations mentioned multiple times include Peavey Mart, the 'Old Rivier Academy', Gateway Mall, the 'old sanitorium' north of the river, 588 18th Street East, the Dave Steuart Arena, and a location near the hospital, including Urban Reserve Land. This includes input from letters received ahead of the December 16 Council Meeting in support of the 15th Street East location.

Anti-Specific Location- Feedback was provided against specific locations. There was significant feedback against locating the shelter in a residential area, which was underscored by letters received ahead of the Council meeting on October 7, 2024. There was also significant concern raised by downtown business owners about locating the shelter downtown. This feedback included concerns about the impact of a shelter on businesses and concerns about the current impact of homelessness on businesses.

General Location Comments - participants provided general feedback on locations and associated considerations such as incentives for neighborhoods to accept the shelter, and linking the decision regarding a location with low tax areas.

Shelter Transparency - Feedback relating to shelter transparency included questions about connections between the shelter and other service provision, the availability of information, transparency around data and figures to inform planning, and questions

about funding for the project. There was also feedback either criticizing or supporting the consultation approach and education provided.

Interior Services and Amenities at the Shelter - A theme emerged regarding services and amenities at the shelter. Programming and access to culturally sensitive services was noted multiple times.

Exterior Services and Amenities at the Shelter – Participants made observations about external space and design such as the need for privacy, good lighting and green space.

Shelter Alternatives - There was feedback that The City should focus on priorities other than finding a permanent location for the shelter, most notably, a complex needs centre and access to treatment services.

City Wide Changes - There was feedback that there need to be changes across the City of Prince Albert, for instance, considering the ‘bigger picture’ beyond the shelter.

Urgency - There was some feedback that a location should not be decided on too soon, and significant feedback that a location should be found as a matter of urgency.

Survey Feedback

The survey was created using the themes discovered at the consultation meetings as the basis for the questions that were used. Types of questions included, where the survey taker lived in the city (to assess attitudes by neighbourhood), where the survey taker most and least preferred a shelter based on proximity to shelter relevant services, and Likert scale questions (a style of question that has the respondent pick an answer on a 5-point scale that resembles a strongly disagree-disagree-neutral-agree-strongly agree pattern) to assess the general sentiment of each of the remaining topics. The survey was created via the City’s ArcGis software and was posted on The City’s website for one week for the public to fill out. The software used allowed limiting survey takers to submit one survey each based on their browser history.

With regards to location:

- 65.94% of respondents (n=1,003) indicated their preferred option would be either immediately adjacent to or a 5-10 minute walk from services.
- 78.43% (n=1193) indicated their least preferred location is within a primarily residential neighborhood.

| Most Preferred Location | | |
|--|--------|-------|
| | Number | % |
| Immediately adjacent to support services such as legal assistance, probation, adult education | 513 | 33.73 |
| In an industrial or commercial area, away from a primarily residential neighborhood, but within a 5-10 minute (3-5 blocks) walk from support services | 490 | 32.22 |
| In an industrial or commercial area away from a primarily residential neighborhood, within a 20 minute (5-10 blocks) walk from support services, but immediately adjacent to public transit options. | 358 | 23.54 |
| Within a primarily residential neighborhood | 12 | 0.79 |
| None of the above | 148 | 9.73 |
| Total responses | 1,521 | 100% |

| Least Preferred Location | | |
|--|--------|-------|
| | Number | % |
| Immediately adjacent to support services such as legal assistance, probation, adult education | 44 | 2.89 |
| In an industrial or commercial area, away from a primarily residential neighborhood, but within a 5-10 minute (3-5 blocks) walk from support services | 56 | 3.68 |
| In an industrial or commercial area away from a primarily residential neighborhood, within a 20 minute (5-10 blocks) walk from support services, but immediately adjacent to public transit options. | 160 | 10.52 |
| Within a primarily residential neighborhood | 1193 | 78.44 |
| None of the above | 68 | 4.47 |
| Total responses | 1,521 | 100% |

The table below lists 'favourable responses', which helps Administration, The Province, and the service provider to understand what considerations are important when identifying a location, and what considerations are important in relation to planning and delivery.

In relation to identifying a location, enough space for the build, urgency, and accessibility emerged as strong considerations.

In relation to planning and delivery, ongoing shelter-related transparency, service availability, and ongoing public engagement emerged as priorities for the public.

Administration recognizes the question in relation to security was too ambiguous and ongoing engagement and transparency activities should clarify aspects of security that are important to the community.

| Percentage of Favourable Responses | |
|---|-------|
| Do you think that the shelter should have room for external services for shelter clients (e.g. medical, counselling, education, etc...)? | 79.95 |
| Is it important for the shelter to have facilities (e.g. bathrooms, shower, laundry, warm up space) available to people who do not have a bed at the shelter? | 79.63 |
| How important are ongoing, shelter-related transparency initiatives such as a neighbourhood advisory board and safety statistics to you? | 74.33 |
| How Urgently Do You Want to See a New Shelter Built? | 73.84 |
| How important is accessibility to the shelter (e.g. close to bus routes, walkable, wheelchair accessible, etc...) | 67.65 |
| How important is ongoing public engagement to you? (e.g. public workshops, volunteer opportunities, etc...) | 62.89 |
| Does knowing that the shelter provides 24-hour security to the surrounding area make you feel more comfortable with its placement? | 53.72 |
| How important is the exterior aesthetic appearance of the shelter to you? | 46.36 |
| How important is greenspace around the shelter? | 43.54 |
| <i>100 indicates a strongly favourable response, 50 indicates a neutral response, and 0 indicates a strongly negative response</i> | |

Scoring Matrix

Based on the responses above, the scoring matrix includes the following factors: service accessibility, shelter accessibility, urgency (building considerations that impact time and costs), distance from residential areas, and availability of outdoor space as part of the development. Each factor is scored from 0-3, with 3 being the highest score.

To help visualise and score locations according to the factors that are important to the community, Administration used software to map services, transport routes, estimated walking time, and densely residential areas. The map also included City-owned land and daycares.

Administration attempted to include as many of the locations mentioned in the consultation sessions as possible, particularly any that were mentioned more than twice.

The first table lists city-owned property:

| Location | Service Accessibility | Shelter Accessibility | Serviced and paved access (cost and time implications) | Distance from Residential | Availability of outdoor space as part of the development | Total |
|---|--|--|--|----------------------------------|--|-------|
| 11 15 th Street East | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 14 |
| Close proximity to current shelter location | 1 (more than a 10-minute walk to services) | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| 17 th Street East/3 Ave East | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 (2 blocks from residential) | 3 | 9 |
| 111 18 th Street West | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 (1 block from residential) | 3 | 12 |
| Land near the hospital | 1 (majority of services are more than a 20-minute walk) | 2 | 0 (No serviced land identified) | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| Land north of the river | 0 (more than a 20-minute walk to services) | 0 (Would require transport solution risking sustainability) | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |

The second table lists privately owned properties mentioned in feedback for transparency. However, it is important to note that property owners have not necessarily been approached to discuss whether any of these locations are available to purchase or lease.

| Location | Service Accessibility | Shelter Accessibility | Serviced and paved access (cost and time implications) | Distance from Residential | Availability of outdoor space as part of the development | Total |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|-----------|
| 568 18 th Street East | 1 (more than a 10-minute walk to services) | 2 (access from 6 th via stairs only, increased likelihood of pedestrians crossing railway tracks) | 3 | 1 (opposite residential) | 3 | 10 |
| Gateway Mall (e.g. Sears) | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 (outdoor space would require use of parking lot) | 12 |
| 1525 5 th Avenue East | 1 (more than a 10-minute walk to services) | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| Peavey Mart | 1 (more than a 10-minute walk to services) | 3 | 3 | 1 (1 block from residential) | 2 | 10 |
| 1405 Bishop Pascal Place ('Old Rivier Academy') | 1 (more than a 10-minute walk to services) | 3 | 3 | 0 (in a residential neighbourhood) | 3 | 10 |

In summary the following four (4) properties that are City owned or for sale scored the highest:

- 11, 15th Street East – 14 points (City owned)
- 111, 18th Street West – 12 points (City owned)
- 1525 5th Avenue East – 11 points (For sale)
- Close proximity to current location – 11 points (City Owned)

CONSULTATIONS:

This report incorporates data gathered across the last 12-months and an extensive consultation process recently undertaken. It also draws on feedback from surveys completed with individuals that have lived and living experience of accessing the emergency shelter.

COMMUNICATION AND/OR ANNOUNCEMENT PLAN:

Administration recommends formally writing to all property owners surrounding the four (4) highest scoring properties listed above and advertising the consultation through media to encourage broad engagement across the community.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Beyond Administration time and cost of the venue, there are no budget of financial implications for The City. There is a high risk that The Province will not be able to continue to hold funding to relocate the emergency shelter if a decision on a location is not prioritized by The City, given the funding has been available for over 12-months.

If the shelter location is City-owned property, there will be financial considerations for Council.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

Homelessness is a complex issue that impacts not only individuals without stable housing but also the broader community of Prince Albert. By creating a dedicated space for those experiencing homelessness, we can cultivate a supportive environment that promotes stability, dignity, and access to essential services.

A permanent shelter is a crucial resource for individuals experiencing homelessness. It provides safety, fosters a sense of community, and connects residents to vital services such as healthcare, employment support, and counseling.

The City's Community Safety and Well-Being Division is working with partners to take a comprehensive approach to tackle the various social issues affecting Prince Albert and other communities. This approach is like putting together a puzzle, and the emergency shelter is a crucial part of this overall plan, and without it, the ability to solve social issues in the community will be seriously undermined.

OPTIONS TO RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Administration proceed with a public meeting with a focus on the top scored location according to the matrix. This approach was discounted given that feedback from the public was in favour of discussing outcomes of the consultation and survey more broadly than only one location.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

A priority of the City of Prince Albert Strategic Plan is “promoting a progressive community” where the City will examine options for stimulating shared problem ownership and collaborative solution building for Prince Albert’s social issues.

Working with The Province and the YWCA to establish a homeless shelter is a very valuable partnership which provides an integral service to our vulnerable population.

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN:

The Official Community Plan states that,

“Prince Albert functions as both the gateway to the north and to the south. For this reason, it is a regional hub for a range of services in health, education, social services and justice and as such has need for transitional and supportive housing. Notwithstanding the recent expansion in emergency shelter beds, [for which further funding is now being provided] there will be a need to monitor the need in this area as well. As a community, Prince Albert wants to stimulate independence of its citizens but realizes that some will require support to function optimally. It is a goal of this Plan to create the context where all citizens can have safe, secure, affordable housing that meets their needs.”

The work that to develop a new, permanent Shelter means that The City and all its partners have continued to monitor and advocate for Prince Albert’s need. The result is one of the most critical services we require, a Shelter.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Bylaw No. 24 of 2015 is not required, however Administration will provide public notice in advance of the public meeting.

PRESENTATION:

A presentation will be provided by Anna Dinsdale, Community Safety and Well-Being Manager.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Detailed Consultation Results EES January 2025 FINAL
2. Enhanced Emergency Shelter Presentation March 3, 2025 – PRESENTED AT MEETING

Written by: Anna Dinsdale, Community Safety and Well-Being Manager

Approved by: Director Community Development & City Manager