

WALKER FIRE STATION CO-LOCATION UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That Community and Public Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That the approval of the revised scope of the Walker Fire Station project from a standalone fire station to an integrated fire station and supportive housing project, as outlined in the June 27, 2022 Community Services report CS01295, be approved.

Report Purpose

Council decision required

Administration is providing an update and seeking approval on a change of scope on the Walker Fire Station project to include a supportive housing element.

Executive Summary

- Initial design and land acquisition for a new fire station, referred to as the Walker Fire Station, in the southeast area of the city was approved in the 2019-2022 Capital Budget.
- The project scope is proposed to be amended to include a fire station and supportive housing units in the same facility.
- This co-location project is a change of scope from the original capital budget business case.
- Administration is proposing that the previously approved funding of \$5.6 million be utilized to advance land acquisition and concept development and design to Project Development and Delivery Model Checkpoint 3 for a co-located fire and supportive housing facility.

REPORT

As part of the Fire Rescue Services Station Location Master Plan, Administration identified that a new fire station in the southeast area of Edmonton (south of Anthony Henday and east of 66 Street) is a top priority.

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The 2019-2022 Capital Budget included an approved business case (previously named Charlesworth Fire Station) for a new fire station in the southeast area of the city. During budget deliberations the project was approved, however, the funding was put in abeyance until Administration brought back additional information to Council on the fire station Off-Site Levy Bylaw. At the June 29, 2020, City Council meeting, the funds held in abeyance were released for land acquisition and initial design (CR_6758 Charlesworth Fire Station Design and Land Acquisition). Between 2019 and 2021 land was acquired in the Walker neighbourhood.

Since 2021, Administration has worked on the development of the new co-location concept and completion of a revised business case is in the initial stage of the Project Development and Delivery Model per City Policy C591 - Capital Project Governance Policy. As the project scope has been revised from what was previously approved (Attachment 1), Council approval is required to proceed beyond Checkpoint 1 of the Project Development and Delivery Model and move into concept development and design.

Co-Location Model

Context

City Council has directed Administration to pursue the development of supportive and affordable housing and provided Administration with a capital profile to support the land acquisition necessary to achieve this goal. Administration has worked to reduce costs to the City by identifying opportunities to leverage existing City-owned sites.

Between 2019 and 2021, Administration investigated and subsequently amended the proposed plan for Walker Fire Station to include a fire station and supportive housing units in the same facility.

Overview

Administration is planning on using a City-owned surplus parcel of land at Ellerslie Road and Watt Boulevard SW for the Walker Fire Station. If delivery funding is approved as part of the 2023-2026 Capital Budget, the station could be operational in 2027. When operational, it will provide "first in" response to the Southeast Area Structure Plan and will immediately improve the provision of emergency services to the neighbourhoods surrounding the station. The travel time and overall response time to an emergency event will be greatly reduced.

This project will see the servicing, design and construction of a new three-bay (approximately 1,500 square metre) fire station in the Walker neighbourhood with parking and 64 units of supportive housing attached, likely above the main bay, dorms, studies, and other fire hall amenity rooms. There will also be an attached Alberta Health Services emergency medical services station. The land parcel is large enough to include development of another building that could accommodate 48 additional affordable housing units and parking. However, only initial concepts have been contemplated for this and further work is out of scope for this project.

The operating model for the supportive housing units has not yet been determined and will be developed through the engagement and procurement processes for a prospective operator. As such, no lease, sale, or other operating parameters have been established at this time, however,

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they will be developed and brought back to Council for approval where required as the project progresses.

Administration has looked at examples of co-located fire stations and affordable housing in Calgary, Vancouver, Wilmington in Delaware, Montgomery County in Maryland and Alexandria in Virginia. The results of that analysis indicate that the integrated facility concept has a high likelihood of success. Further engagement and lessons learned from the projects in other communities will be implemented in the conceptual and schematic design phase of the project.

The City of Edmonton has experienced comparable successes in co-locating other City services in the past with partner organizations, such as recreation centres and libraries, childcare operators and educational institutions. An operational example of co-location is Clareview Recreation Centre, which pairs a multi-use recreation centre with Edmonton Public Library, a YMCA daycare and joint use with Edmonton Catholic School District.

Model Benefits

The Walker Integrated Site will co-locate fire rescue, emergency medical services and supportive housing to improve livability for Edmontonians, optimize investment and inform future planning criteria.

There are a number of beneficial aspects for this co-location model including:

- As a joint project, there is confidence in a project model that reflects the effective use of municipal assets for both developments by sharing the same land and space and investing in the same servicing infrastructure needed at one time rather than as separate projects.
- Once developed, occupied and operational, there are opportunities to have greater interaction and relationship between community and Fire Rescue Services through a more integrated development, with potential for mutual benefits in community safety and wellbeing.
- This supportive housing project will increase Edmonton's supportive housing inventory by up to an estimated 64 units, with room for an additional 48 units of affordable housing in the additional building on the parcel. This contributes to increased density in the neighborhood, aligned with the City Plan and supports the distribution of affordable housing throughout Edmonton, in line with City Policy C601.
- The site is well suited for supportive housing as it is directly adjacent to necessary amenities such as grocery stores, banks, schools, and green space. The site is adjacent to two bus stops and has all day transit service, including service on weekends.
- The co-location project aligns directly to the City Plan's Big City Moves:
 - Rebuildable City - increasing intensity and use on a traditional City service site.
 - Community of Communities - promoting new housing in an area with amenities that are within close proximity.
 - Inclusive and Compassionate - directly supporting some of the most vulnerable Edmontonians in housing need.

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Next Steps

This supportive housing co-location model is part of a larger Affordable Housing Investment Plan and approach to increasing supportive housing in Edmonton which will be presented to Council in fall 2022. Administration also continues to explore other funding sources for the supportive housing component of the project. For example, if the housing was focused on families or women and children, the City may be able to access additional Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation specific funding.

In order to support the project, a subdivision and rezoning of the property site into two lots would need to take place. The integrated site would need to be rezoned as a Site Specific Development Control Provision (DC2) to include all the permitted uses and the other lot would require a rezoning to Low Rise Apartment (RA7) to match the adjacent medium-density residential properties.

Budget/Financial Implications

In the 2019-2022 Capital Budget the previously named Charlesworth Fires Station project was approved to complete Project Development and Delivery Model Checkpoint 3 for the Walker Fire Station within capital profile CM-10-1010 (Facility: Planning and Design - Growth) and was to include: land acquisition and completion of design development. It is proposed that the \$5.6 million funding be utilized to advance land acquisition and concept development and design to Project Development and Delivery Model Checkpoint 3 for a co-located fire and supportive housing facility.

Once the project reaches Project Development and Delivery Model Checkpoint 3, anticipated for 2024, Administration will develop a capital profile for the delivery phase, including detailed design and construction, for the co-located fire station and supportive housing building. This profile will be brought forward for funding through a Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Community consultation has not yet occurred on the project. Engagement is expected to occur through the rezoning process and through the development phase of the project. Any future operator of supportive housing on the site will be required to develop a good neighbor plan.

GBA+

Housing is a significant barrier for anyone who lacks personal references, employment, or has a criminal record, forcing them to stay in living conditions that are not up to minimum safety standards.

The number of Edmontonians experiencing homelessness has almost doubled since the beginning of the pandemic. Homeward Trust's By Name List serves as a real-time record of all known people currently experiencing homelessness across Edmonton. As of May 2022, there are more than 2,800 people on this list. Of those 2,800+ people, over 1,150 are either currently staying in a shelter or sleeping outdoors, with the remainder provisionally accommodated

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(couch-surfing, short-term housing, etc.) Despite making up only five per cent of Edmonton's overall population, over 60 per cent of these individuals are Indigenous. Housing is needed that incorporates the needs of Indigenous residents, including multigenerational families, and which reflect cultural beliefs and create space for traditional ceremonies.

Of the more than 2,800 individuals experiencing homelessness, approximately 45 per cent identify as female. Women are more likely to be represented in the "hidden homeless" population. Women are less likely to use shelters, services and other services for individuals experiencing homelessness. As a result, they are often under-reported in homelessness counts. In 2016, there were 7,795 renter single mothers/female heads of household living in core housing need, which constituted two-thirds of all single mothers/female heads of household.

People with disabilities and significant health challenges are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness and in housing need. Many services available to people experiencing homelessness are not designed to meet the needs of people with significant and complex physical and mental health challenges, including substance use disorders. In 2016, there were 15,715 renter households who had an individual dealing with a psychosocial disability living in core housing need. Administration has heard there is a critical need for additional mental health supports and housing units to support individuals.

ATTACHMENT

1. Walker Joint Fire Hall and Supportive Housing Business Case