

COUNCIL REPORT



AFFORDABLE HOUSING SITE - SALE OF LAND BELOW MARKET VALUE - ATHLONE RESIDENTIAL

Recommendation

That the sale of land in Athlone outlined in Attachment 1 of the December 6, 2023, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS02105, to Veterans’ House Canada, on the terms and conditions outlined in Attachment 2 of the December 6, 2023, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS02105, be approved, and that the agreement be in form and content acceptable to the City Manager.

Requested Action	Decision required		
ConnectEdmonton’s Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Urban Places		
City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Inclusive and compassionate	Relationship to Council’s Strategic Priorities	Community Safety and Well Being
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	A short list of the most relevant items, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Resilience Policy (C627) • Public Engagement Policy (C593A) • City Land Assets for Non-Profit Affordable Housing (Council Policy C437A) • Affordable Housing Investment Guidelines (C601) 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 20, 2023, City Council Public Hearing, Bylaw 20616 - To close the 131 Street NW road right of way, Athlone. City Council Public Hearing, • November 20, 2023, City Council Public Hearing, Charter Bylaw 20617 - To allow for low-rise multi-unit supportive housing and the retention of parkland, Athlone 		

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SITE - SALE OF LAND BELOW MARKET VALUE - ATHLONE RESIDENTIAL

Executive Summary

- Executive Committee is being asked to approve the sale of the Athlone site for below market value to enable Veterans' House Canada to develop the site for affordable housing.
- Veterans' House Canada's proposal would see approximately 40 supportive housing units built, contributing to the City's four-year Affordable Housing Investment Plan. Veterans' House Canada will be required to enter into an Affordable Housing Agreement as a condition of the sale.
- Executive Committee approval is required as the proposed below market value sale is outside of Administration's delegated authority.

REPORT

The City's new four-year Affordable Housing Investment Plan presented during the 2023-2026 budget deliberations calls for 3,690 new affordable housing units by 2026, including an estimated 409 new supportive housing units.

As part of ongoing efforts to enable the construction of affordable housing units, the City of Edmonton initiated a call out to affordable housing providers seeking to partner on Rapid Housing Initiative Round 3 applications in December 2022. Veterans' House Canada approached the City on a potential submission with a request for land that could accommodate a comparable development to their Andy Carswell Building, located in Ottawa, which supports veterans who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Administration subsequently completed a review of City land that was surplus to municipal use and identified the Athlone parcel as the best fit for Veterans' House Canada's requirements. The site, shown in Attachment 1, is located along 128 Avenue east of 130 Street and includes a portion of the undeveloped 131 Street road right of way, comprising a total size of 0.60 hectares or 1.48 acres. The remaining 2.0 hectares (4.94 acres) of the parent parcel was rezoned to Public Parks zone (AP) on November 20, 2023 and will remain as open space.

The Athlone neighborhood currently has a non-market housing (government subsidized housing rented to low or moderate income households at less than market rent) ratio of less than two per cent, well below the 16 per cent target for neighborhoods citywide adopted by City Council on August 21, 2018, pursuant to report CR_5073 (City Policy - City-Wide Affordable Housing Framework). Should the Athlone site be sold to and developed by Veterans' House Canada, the non-market housing ratio in the area will increase to approximately five per cent.

The proposal from Veterans' House Canada would see approximately 40 units of supportive housing units built on site. Although the project had not advanced far enough to meet the Rapid Housing Initiative Round 3 timeframe requirements, the proposal has conditionally been awarded \$3.4 million from the Government of Alberta's Affordable Housing Partnership program. To complete this funding arrangement, Veterans' House Canada has communicated that the provincial government will require certainty around land ownership of the site before December 31, 2023.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SITE - SALE OF LAND BELOW MARKET VALUE - ATHLONE RESIDENTIAL

Most recently, Administration has advanced the necessary planning work to prepare the land for sale including rezoning and road closure applications, which were approved at the November 20, 2023, City Council Public Hearing.

Veterans' House Canada

Veterans' House Canada is a non-profit organization that helps homeless veterans build a better future by providing permanent, affordable and supportive housing. The total number of homeless veterans in Canada is estimated to be between 2,400 to 10,000. Veterans are more than twice as likely to experience homelessness compared to the general population.¹ In Alberta, veterans comprise a larger percentage of the homeless population (6.5 per cent) relative to the rest of Canada (five per cent). This suggests that in Edmonton there are as many as 180 veterans who are currently experiencing homelessness. As Veterans' House Canada tenants are all veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans' House Canada can access federal, national and local support. While most homeless veterans would qualify for these supports, most do not apply for them as they do not have the means to do so (e.g. a permanent address, access to the internet, access to knowledge support teams). Being a tenant in a Veterans' House Canada residence will allow them to access these supports. Veterans' House Canada can also apply for federal funding programs such as Veterans' House Canada Veteran and Family Well Being Fund and the recently announced Veteran Homelessness Program. Access to federal funding for veterans will help alleviate the strain on City and provincial resources for these veteran tenants.

Next Steps:

If the recommendations are approved:

- Administration will execute the Sale Agreement. The City and Veterans' House Canada will work toward fulfilling the conditions precedent, including execution of an Affordable Housing Agreement, and closing the transaction by Q2 2024.
- It is anticipated that construction will commence by Q3 2024.

Budget/Financial Implications

The market value of this site is approximately \$1.3 million. Since 2015, City Council has approved below market value land sales to non-profit housing providers with cumulative market values totalling \$36.2 million. The ongoing operating expenses will be the responsibility of Veterans' House Canada.

Legal Implications

As per section 70(2) of the *Municipal Government Act*, a disposition of land for below market value does not need to be advertised if it is to be used by a non-profit organization as defined in section 241(f) of the *Municipal Government Act*. As the proposed approval is for the disposition of the land to a non-profit organization, advertising is not required.

¹ [Addressing Veteran Homelessness in Canada - Policy Brief, July 2023](#)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SITE - SALE OF LAND BELOW MARKET VALUE - ATHLONE RESIDENTIAL

Section 35 of City Bylaw 16620 (City Administration Bylaw) enables the City Manager to approve agreements for disposition of a fee simple interest in land for fair market value or more, up to certain monetary limits. Approval is needed as this disposition will be below fair market value.

Community Insight

The City of Edmonton creates opportunities for the development of supportive housing by assisting non-profit organizations through the land development process. As part of this work, the City may provide land, capital funding and organizational support. Public engagement typically takes place around zoning changes, if they are required. Like any other residential project, zoning regulates the built form and permitted uses, so community approval is not necessary to determine the location, design, type of housing or cost to tenants.

The City proactively shares information about new supportive housing developments with communities. As a project progresses, the developer/operator may decide to hold additional meetings, distribute project information and find other ways to build relationships with the community. This is intended to help build relationships and ensure the long-term success of each project.

For the Athlone property, the City shared its intention to use this site for supportive housing in a notification letter related to the rezoning application sent to neighbours within a 60-meter radius in July 2023. An additional notice to residents within an expanded 120-meter radius was sent September 14, 2023 to inform residents of the public engagement opportunity. Public engagement related to land use took place from September 25 to October 8, 2023. Following the public hearing on November 20, Administration shared the intention to sell the land to Veterans' House Canada with neighbours and the community league through a mailout and email.

The sale agreement is conditional on the purchaser completing a Community Engagement Plan and hosting Engagement Events to the City's satisfaction. If the land sale is approved, Veterans' House Canada will implement its Communications and Public Engagement Plan in 2024.

GBA+

Housing is a significant barrier for anyone who lacks personal references, employment or has limited resources, compelling them to stay in living arrangements that do not meet their needs for stable and secure housing. According to Statistics Canada, a household is considered to be in "core housing need" if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it would have to spend 30 per cent or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards).

Veterans struggling with homelessness is an issue in many cities across Canada and is recognized as a national issue. The most recent national Point in Time (PiT) Homeless Count², conducted in 2018, found that 4.4 per cent of the homeless people enumerated were veterans despite veterans comprising only 1.7 per cent of the Canadian population. In Alberta, the percentage of

² [Everyone Count 2108: Highlights Report](#)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SITE - SALE OF LAND BELOW MARKET VALUE - ATHLONE RESIDENTIAL

the homeless population that are veterans is 6.5 per cent, which is higher than the national average of 5 per cent.

Many Edmontonians, including low-wage workers, seniors, single-income families, and people who need income support, struggle to cover their housing costs. Housing insecurity and homelessness impacts everyone from all backgrounds in Edmonton.

Attachments

1. Athlone - Site Plan
2. Athlone - Sales Agreement Terms and Conditions