

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: 21 Merrymeeting Road – REZ2300018 – Adoption

Date Prepared: October 9, 2024

Report To: Regular Meeting of Council

Councillor and Role: Councillor Maggie Burton, Planning

Ward: Ward 2

Decision/Direction Required:

That Council adopt Envision St. John’s Development Regulations Amendment Number 46, 2024, to add “Lodging House” as a discretionary use in the Commercial Office (CO) Zone.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The City has received an application from The Physically Disabled Service Centre Inc. (The HUB) located at 21 Merrymeeting Road to convert office space into six (6) residential bedsitting rooms with shared bathroom, laundry and kitchen facilities. This is classified as a Lodging House use per the Envision St. John’s Development Regulations. A Lodging House is defined as “... a Dwelling Unit wherein accommodation is provided for between five (5) and sixteen (16) persons inclusive, in which kitchen and/or bathroom facilities are used in common by some or all the occupants.”

The subject property is zoned Commercial Office (CO) and is within the Residential District of the Envision St. John’s Municipal Plan. As a Lodging House is not a listed use in the CO Zone, an amendment to the Development Regulations is required to consider the use.

The proposed text amendment to the CO Zone is to add Lodging House as a discretionary use. This aligns with Municipal Plan policies that encourage a mix of housing forms and tenures. Additional details and analysis can be found in the attached amendment.

Parking Relief

The proposed Lodging House use at 21 Merrymeeting Road requires three parking spaces. The applicant is requesting parking relief for these spaces. Their rationale is there are existing parking spaces on the site that will be dedicated to the Lodging House use; there is on-street parking available; and the intended residents will be persons with disabilities who will not own vehicles. City staff support the request.

Land Use Report

Section 4.9(2)(a) of the Development Regulations requires a land use report (LUR) for rezonings. However, as per Section 4.9(3), where the scale or circumstances of the proposed development do not merit a full LUR, Council may accept a staff report. As this is a simple text

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amendment to the CO Zone to enable a new use in an existing building, staff recommend that Council accept this staff report in lieu of an LUR.

Public Consultation

At its regular meeting on January 23, 2024, Council voted to consider the amendment. The proposed amendment was advertised in a local newspaper on three occasions, mailed to property owners within 150 metres of the site, and posted on the City's website and Planning Engage page. The discretionary use for a Lodging House specifically at 21 Merrymeeting Road was advertised along with the amendment. Written submissions received are attached for Council's review. Feedback was also collected through the project's Engage page, and a report is attached for review.

The surrounding neighbourhood expressed a mix of support and opposition to the proposed Lodging House use. Several residents support the application and believe it will increase affordable housing within the neighbourhood and is a good use of the property. Others recognized the need for more housing but felt that the proposed Lodging House would not be appropriate here. The concerns expressed by area residents are summarized as follows:

- **Safety and security** – Area residents felt the proposed use would have a negative impact on residents' safety and security in the community. Some feel it will cause greater instability in the area. Several residents expressed concerns about the safety of future residents of the Lodging House and asked about supervision of the site and adequate supports for the tenants.
- **Risk of crime** – Area residents felt incidents of crime have increased in the neighbourhood and fear the proposed use will lead to more.
- **Life safety and building condition** – Area residents raised concerns about the condition of the HUB building. Others were concerned about risk of fire and adequate living conditions.
- **Litter** – There was concern about litter and debris on the site and surrounding properties.
- **Noise** – Some expressed concerns about unwelcome noise and disturbances in the neighbourhood.
- **Parking** – Residents expressed concern about lack of on-street parking in the area.
- **Increase in Lodging Houses** – Residents questioned if the amendment would enable more Lodging Houses within the neighbourhood.

Staff acknowledge these concerns, most of which are specific to the HUB at 21 Merrymeeting Road. This property is subject to the City's Noise By-law and the Commercial Maintenance By-law. Should the Lodging House use be approved for this site, it would also be subject to the Residential Property Standards By-law. Further, any interior renovations must comply with the National Building Code for safety.

The proposed amendment would enable Lodging House as a discretionary use within the Commercial Office (CO) Zone. Any application for a Lodging House on other CO-zoned properties would need to be publicly advertised before Council decided whether to approve them.

Our Healthy City Strategy identifies housing as a key pillar and recognizes that a range of affordable, adequate, and accessible housing contributes to a healthy community. The City's Affordable Housing Strategy 2019-2028 also speaks to the importance of a diverse and inclusive housing stock. Lodging Houses are a form of affordable housing. The Affordable Housing Strategy addresses some common fears such as the fear of reduced neighbourhood safety by introducing unstable residents. Often, those who can benefit from affordable housing already live nearby.

Next Steps

Council can now adopt the attached text amendment. Should Council decide to adopt this amendment, the documents will be forwarded to the NL Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs for registration.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Not applicable.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: Property owner; nearby residents and property owners.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions:

A Sustainable City: Plan for land use and preserve and enhance the natural and built environment where we live.

A Sustainable City: Facilitate and create the conditions that drive the economy by being business and industry friendly; and being a location of choice for residents, businesses and visitors.

4. Alignment with Adopted Plans: Envision St. John's Municipal Plan and Development Regulations; City of St. John's Affordable Housing Strategy 2019-2028; Healthy City Strategy.
5. Accessibility and Inclusion: Not applicable.
6. Legal or Policy Implications: A text amendment to the Envision St. John's Development Regulations is required.
7. Privacy Implications: Not applicable.
8. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Public consultation was carried out in accordance with the Development Regulations.
9. Human Resource Implications: Not applicable.
10. Procurement Implications: Not applicable.

11. Information Technology Implications: Not applicable.

12. Other Implications: Not applicable.

Recommendation:

That Council adopt Envision St. John's Development Regulations Amendment Number 46, 2024, to add Lodging House as a discretionary use in the Commercial Office (CO) Zone.

Further, that Council approve the discretionary use of a Lodging House at 21 Merrymeeting Road and grant parking relief of three (3) spaces.

Prepared by: Faith Ford, MCIP, Planner III

Approved by: Ken O'Brien, MCIP, Chief Municipal Planner

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	21 Merrymeeting Road - REZ2300018 - Adoption.docx
Attachments:	- 21 MERRYMEETING ROAD_Location_Map.pdf - DR Amendment No. 46 - 21 Merrymeeting Road - TEXT (ff).pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 9, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Ken O'Brien - Oct 9, 2024 - 1:19 PM

Jason Sinyard - Oct 9, 2024 - 2:28 PM