

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: 26 Alexander Street – REZ2400002 - Adoption
Date Prepared: December 2, 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 47, 2024, to rezone the property at 26 Alexander Street from the Commercial Local (CL) Zone to the Apartment 2 (A2) Zone.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The City has received an application from Power Brothers Inc. to rezone 26 Alexander Street from the Commercial Local (CL) Zone to the Apartment 2 (A2) Zone to accommodate an Apartment Building. The commercial building on site has been there for many decades, formerly Power's Salvage and before that, Mammy's Bakery. Connections for Seniors proposes to redevelop the building into affordable seniors' housing with 60 rental units. The Apartment Building use is permitted in the A2 Zone.

Background information and details about the proposed development are provided in the attached amendment.

Public Consultation

At its regular meeting on July 9, 2024, Council voted to consider the amendment and hold a public meeting. The proposed rezoning was advertised three (3) times in *The Telegram*, mailed to property owners within 150 metres of the site, posted on the City's website, and a project page was created on the City's Planning Engage page. The meeting was held on November 20, 2024 at 7pm at City Hall, with 16 people in-person and 6 people online for a total of 22 attendees. Submissions received and minutes from the meeting are attached.

While most residents supported the proposed changes, many were concerned about lack of parking proposed. Their concerns, and staff commentary, are provided for Council's review.

1. Public Comment: Parking Concerns

The main concern at the public meeting was parking. Under City regulations, the applicant requires 55 parking spaces for the proposed Apartment Building. They propose five (5) spaces on the site and request parking relief for the remaining 50 spaces. Staff have reviewed alternative arrangements with the applicant in an effort to meet the parking requirement or support the request for relief. The applicant did propose a Parking Lot at 25 Patrick Street,

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which is located behind 26 Alexander Street. However, the Parking Lot could not meet section 5.8.2 of our Development Design Manual (DDM) for vehicle turning movements and could not be approved. The applicant is still considering buying 25 Patrick Street to make a direct pedestrian connection from their nearby facility at 6 Patrick Street to 26 Alexander Street.

The applicant's reasons to request parking relief are as follows:

1. The residents who will live in the proposed building will not own vehicles.
2. Connections for Seniors have their own transportation program for residents using two vans (one is wheelchair-accessible) and a truck. The program supports four key areas: health, financial support, housing, and food security. Other transportation needs (such as shopping, recreation, and visiting family) can be met, with the four key areas prioritized in case of scheduling conflicts or full bookings. Residents are entitled to 24 free rides per year for any purpose. After that, they can buy additional rides at a discounted rate. The program operates daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There are plans to expand by adding another van and extending the hours of operation.
3. Most of the seniors receiving income support automatically qualify for a Metrobus pass, and many of their clients use Metrobus. There are two Metrobus stops within 200 metres of the subject property. Additionally, any client over the age of 65 receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) is eligible for a free GoBus pass.

Staff have concerns since there are known parking problems in the area, and limited on-street parking along Alexander Street. Additionally, while Metrobus stops are nearby, bus users must cross Water Street, a five-lane arterial road, to use the bus route travelling east. The installation of a crosswalk across Water Street at either Alexander Street or Patrick Street would be beneficial and has been discussed. Safety and convenience are important and will be further reviewed at the detailed design stage, should Council approve the rezoning.

Since the proposed development is an affordable, accessible apartment building for low-income seniors, the project aligns with several Envision St. John's Municipal Plan policies. Therefore, the Planning recommendation is for Council to approve parking relief based on the alignment with the following Plan policies:

- Section 4.1 of the Municipal Plan encourages the City to enable a range of housing for diverse neighbourhoods with a mix of housing forms and tenures. Further, it promotes higher density development along key transportation corridors to support increased access to housing and transportation options and to reduce service and infrastructure costs. The proposed accessible Apartment Building will add another housing form to the neighbourhood and is near Metrobus routes.
- Municipal Plan policy 4.1.3 promotes a "range of housing choices for all ages, income groups and family types by supporting the development of housing that is appropriate, accessible and affordable for low-income and moderate-income households." The proposed project is a good fit.
- Plan policy 8.4.11 promotes infill, rehabilitation, and redevelopment projects, thereby using existing infrastructure fully. The proposed development will use an existing building and municipal services while increasing population density.

Additionally, Connections for Seniors have indicated that tenants will not be promised a parking spot in their rental agreements, and the limited parking on site will be reserved for visitors and enforced. Connections for Seniors already has its transportation program which will serve the future residents here. There is a potential parking problem with the development if it does not proceed as per the applicants claims. However, this unique apartment building is governed by a 30-year agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. (CMHC) and NL Housing, and serves a population that is less likely to have vehicles, so long as the development unfolds as proposed by Connections for Seniors, parking should not pose a problem.

2. Public Comment: Number of Residential Shelters in the Neighbourhood

The concentration of residential shelters in the area was a concern for several people. Long-time residents have noticed an increase in drug use and crime. While Connections for Seniors does run a supportive housing program, the proposal at 26 Alexander Street is not an emergency shelter. It is an apartment building for low-income seniors.

Land Use and Parking Reports

This type of rezoning application triggers a land use report (LUR) and a parking report. However, these can be waived in favour of staff reports, should the circumstances of the application be suitable. Given this is an adaptive reuse of an existing building, and a project for affordable housing, staff recommend that Council accept this memo as a staff report in lieu of a land use report and a parking report.

Next Steps

It is recommended that Council adopt the attached amendment and forward it to the NL Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs for registration, accept this staff report in lieu of a land use report and a parking report, and approve parking relief of 50 parking spaces.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Not applicable.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: Neighbouring residents and property owners.
3. Is this a New Plan or Strategy: No
4. 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.

5. Alignment with Adopted Plans: Envision St. John's Municipal Plan policies; St. John's Affordable Housing Strategy, 2019-2028.
6. Accessibility and Inclusion: Universal and barrier-free accessible design is proposed throughout the building. The accessibility requirements from the National Building Code of Canada and/or Service NL will be applied at the building permit stage.
7. Legal or Policy Implications: A map amendment to the Envision St. John's Development Regulations is required.
8. Privacy Implications: Not applicable.
9. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Engagement was carried out in accordance with the Development Regulations.
10. Human Resource Implications: Not applicable.
11. Procurement Implications: Not applicable.
12. Information Technology Implications: Not applicable.
13. Other Implications: Not applicable.

Recommendation:

That Council:

1. Adopt the Envision St. John's Development Regulations Amendment 47, 2024, regarding an Apartment Building at 26 Alexander Street;
2. As per Section 4.9.3 of the Development Regulations, accept this staff report in lieu of a land use report (LUR);
3. As per Section 8.12.5 of the Development Regulations, accept this staff report in lieu of a parking report; and
4. Approve parking relief of 50 parking spaces.

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

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	26 Alexander Street - REZ2400002 - Adoption.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 26 ALEXANDER STREET_Location Map.pdf- DR Amend No. 47, 2024 - 26 Alexander Street - MAP (LJR).pdf- Redacted Engage Report - 26 Alexander Street.pdf- 26 Alexander Street- Redacted Submissions.pdf- Public Meeting Report - 26 Alexander Street.pdf- 26 ALEXANDER ST - Proposal - 20241204.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Dec 6, 2024

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

Ken O'Brien - Dec 5, 2024 - 3:37 PM

Jason Sinyard - Dec 6, 2024 - 10:41 AM