

**Hybrid Public Meeting  
Foran Green Room/Zoom  
Public Meeting – 26 Alexander Street  
Wednesday, November 20, 2024**

**Present:**     **Facilitator**  
Marie Ryan

**City of St. John's**  
Councillor Ron Ellsworth  
Councillor Sandy Hickman  
Lindsay Church, Planner III, Urban Design & Heritage  
Ken O'Brien, Chief Municipal Planner  
Jennifer Squires, Legislative Assistant

**Proponents**  
Mohamed Abdallah, Executive Director, Connections for Seniors  
Nick Herder, Architect

There were approximately 16 people in attendance and 6 people online, for a total of 22 attendees.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Marie Ryan, Chairperson and Facilitator, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. She advised attendees of her role as facilitator and outlined the rules for decorum to ensure everyone who wished to speak had equal opportunity to do so.

She asked that those that were attending in person to come to the mic at the centre of the room should they wish to speak, and they would be provided a three-minute window to provide feedback or ask questions on the proposed rezoning at 26 Alexander Street. Once all attendees have been given an opportunity to speak, attendees may approach the mic for an additional three-minutes to ensure that an equitable amount of time is provided to all attendees. Online participants would be provided the same opportunities to speak on the issue.

The agenda for the meeting was then provided:

- Overview of the application to rezone 26 Alexander Street by City Staff
- Presentation by the Proponent
- Questions and Feedback from Participants

Lindsay Church, Planner III, Urban Design & Heritage informed online participants on how to use the reaction buttons should they wish to speak on the rezoning, noting that accommodations could be made to assist participants if required. A land acknowledgement was then given, recognizing of the history of the land and those that came before us.

**PURPOSE OF MEETING**

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for residents to discuss their concerns and ask questions on an application to rezone property at 26 Alexander Street from the Commercial Local (CL) Zone to the Apartment 2 (A2) Zone to accommodate a sixty (60) unit Apartment Building. Should it be rezoned to the A2 Zone, then any of the permitted uses for the property could then be considered by the City. As the subject property is in the Residential District of the Envision St. John’s Municipal Plan, a Municipal Plan amendment is not required.

**Background and Current Status**

There is an existing commercial building on the site, formerly Power’s Salvage, and Connections for Seniors are proposing to redevelop the building into affordable seniors housing. Existing in Heritage Area 3, the building has been defined as an Out of Character building for the area. The 60 units will be a mix of studio and one-bedroom apartments and will require 55 parking spaces. Connections for Seniors are requesting parking relief of 50 of those spaces. An adjacent lot has been acquired by the applicant at 25 Patrick Street, but it does not meet the required standards of the Development Design Manual and cannot be approved for parking. This was originally advertised in error as 29 Patrick Street. The existing footprint of the building will remain the same, and the renovation work would include interior work, redevelopment of the exterior façade of the building, landscaping, parking, pedestrian pathways, and bike racks. The existing building does not conform to the side and rear yard standards, and the proposed renovations would improve conformity.

Participants were advised that they had until Friday to submit their comments or questions on the application. All comments will be provided to Council for consideration in advance of making a decision on the rezoning. Should the application be approved, it will be sent to the Province for registration. The amendment will come into legal effect once it is published in the Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette.

## PRESENTATION BY THE DEVELOPER

Mohamed Abdallah, the Executive Director, and Founder of Connections for Seniors then provided an overview of the project to the group. Connections for Seniors have a mandate to serve seniors across the province, with a current focus on supplying safe and adequate housing. They are currently housing 37 seniors in emergency shelters and further provide transportation services, a food security program, and provide services to assist seniors with their financial concerns and banking issues. Connections for Seniors also run a not-for-profit personal care home and a supportive housing program in partnership with the City of St. John's. The organization works with residents living in their facilities to ensure they are not socially isolated and are having their needs met.

The project at Alexander Street is their largest affordable housing project to date and will be a partnership between Connections for Seniors, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The 60 units will be fully accessible. The renovations will improve upon the current industrial feel of the building and the building will be energy efficient to help reduce heating costs.

The proponent acknowledged the lack of parking in the area. They informed attendees that they had acquired 25 Patrick Street and hoped to buy the adjacent lot at 29 Patrick Street to create a larger parking area. While parking is a concern, none of the seniors currently living in the Connections for Seniors housing facilities own a car. Most transportation is provided by the organization, and there is additional parking available at the Patrick Street location for Staff if required. Food and transportation costs would be factored in to the rent for the units. There will also be a common area in the building for socialization to prevent isolation. In accordance with an agreement between the organization and their provincial and federal partners, rent will not exceed \$650.00 for the next 30 years. A commitment has been made for the units to remain affordable for seniors and residents will be selected based on need as opposed to income.

## COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

COMMENTS	
Speaker #	Commentary
1.	The speaker voiced their concerns about parking in the area, noting it is already an issue impacting residents. Residents work to accommodate their neighbours, and the additional units will further exacerbate the issue.
2.	Concern was again raised about parking . The street is always full and there is nowhere for visitors to park. Even if the residents do not require spaces, it was questioned where workers would park, and additional

	<p>information was requested on the residents of the apartment building, the estimated duration of construction for the project, and how the area could accommodate the equipment required for construction.</p> <p>The proponent responded that the building would be for seniors only. The connection between the property and the Patrick Street facility was again noted as having additional parking for staff and construction workers if needed. The five spaces at the apartment would be required to comply with the requirements for emergency services. The apartments are not a personal care home and are intended for independent living. Should there be visitors or care workers on site, they will be reminded not to park in the five spaces, and additional parking can be found on Water Street. The build should take 18 months to complete and there will be additional space to park on-site while construction is ongoing.</p> <p>It was then asked if the municipal sewer system would be able to handle the additional demand on the system. Staff advised that no concerns have been raised by the City at this point, and additional detail would be provided and consideration given to the issue at the development stage.</p>
3.	<p>The concentration of shelters in the area was then noted, and frustration was raised at the lack of communication between Councillors, the proponent, and residents. There are over 100 shelter beds in the area, and there are no standards in place for the running of such facilities. Parking was again noted as concern for the area. The City cannot control who moves into a building, and the proponent advised that the apartments would not be an emergency shelter, but affordable housing.</p>
4.	<p>The speaker was supportive of housing for seniors, but had concerns about parking in the area, as well as concerns about crime and drug use stemming from the high number of shelters in the area. They further noted the negative impacts on the value of their home. They asked that the City be more communicative when considering approval of shelters.</p> <p>The proponent advised that their shelter would have wraparound supports, and that their emergency shelter on Patrick Street is not yet operational. Connections for Seniors will be in contact with residents of the area in advance of the opening the building to provide contact information and respond to concerns.</p>
5.	<p>Frustration was voiced concerning the lack of consultation between residents and the City on the approval of shelter spaces in the area.</p>

6.	It was recommended that the proponent consider underground parking for the project. A crosswalk at the bottom of Alexander Street crossing Water Street was further noted as a necessity for the area to address safety concerns.
7.	<p>Clarification was requested on the accessibility of the building. Universal Design concepts and best practices will be incorporated into the units. All residents should be able to live independently in their unit. It was asked that additional consideration be given to the design of the ramps for the building, as the length and slope of ramps make many buildings inaccessible for those without an electric wheelchair.</p> <p>The project architect responded that the design calls for regrading of the area, and it will be at street grading with a slight ramp that will comply with existing accessibility standards. An existing elevator in the building will also be reinstated.</p> <p>It was further asked what parcel of land outside of the downtown area existed for affordable housing. It was recommended that the participant contact the Chief Municipal Planner to discuss the issue. It was then asked how many buildings in the City were fully accessible for seniors that need affordable housing. Staff will investigate the issue and can provide a response at a later date.</p>
8.	The Resident Satisfaction Survey Results were referenced, and the speaker informed participants that Ward 2 ranked last for quality of life. The main priorities of residents were affordable housing and safety. The lack of communication from the City was again noted, and the importance of communication, collaboration, and consultation when building up a community was stated. Parking was again noted as a concern.
9.	Recommendations were made for designing accessible shower and washroom spaces as cleanliness is a major concern for those with mobility issues. Steps are a major barrier for access, as well as door width for those with wheelchairs. These considerations will have a major impact on the quality of life for residents of the building.
10.	The following comment was made online: I agree that communication and a clear, transparent strategy are key for residents, but I want to highlight that since the pandemic, all communities have been changing, with equity-deserving, marginalized groups struggling to survive. The Canadian Mental Health Agency released a report yesterday on the state of mental health and addictions in Canada, and it is dire, with

	<p>outcomes worsening in the last two years. We cannot forget, as outlined in the Health Accord NL, that our population is aging. Within the Health Accord, the province acknowledges that housing security is a social determinant of health and that innovative approaches, as well as community-based care, are required to meet the demands of our aging population and improve health outcomes in this province. I fully support this project and think that creativity is required to meet any of the challenges or logistics identified thus far.</p> <p><a href="https://www.healthaccordnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/HANL_Report_Document_Web_modFeb28-2022.pdf">https://www.healthaccordnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/HANL_Report_Document_Web_modFeb28-2022.pdf</a></p>
11.	<p>Clarification was requested on the application. Staff responded that Council’s approval would be required on two issues: rezoning and parking. When the amendment for rezoning moves forward to Council, parking will also be considered as a separate piece of the motion. The parking requirements are based on building use, and for apartment buildings, a calculation based on the size of units is used to determine the number of spaces required. Council could approve the rezoning, but not approve of parking relief, and the feedback collected on the application will help to inform their decision.</p> <p>It was then asked what would happen should ownership of the building change. While the current residents may not have vehicles, future residents may. Could restrictions be placed on the approval to prevent this from happening? Staff responded that once the A2 Zone is adopted, any use permitted the zone could be allowed. Parking requirements would be reviewed with each new development. The applicant further added that the building could not be sold for 30 years as per their agreements with the provincial and federal government. CMHC will hold a lien against the property for 30 years to ensure it is used for its intended purpose as affordable housing.</p>
12.	<p>Concerns about privacy were raised, as the windows could look directly into adjacent properties. There are restrictions in place to protect privacy which will be followed, and as the project moves forward additional consideration will be given to the design of the space to limit direct lines of sight. The speaker will follow up with Planning Staff with any additional concerns.</p>
13.	<p>It was recommended that a grid be added to ramps before pouring cement to assist with snow and ice clearing.</p>

14.	The enforcement of parking restrictions was noted as a concern, as the City have not responded to parking violations in the past. The proponent advised that they would continue to work towards a parking solution to ensure that parking is not a long-term issue for the development.
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Herein ended the discussion portion of the meeting.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The Chair thanks those in attendance for their participation and advised them to contact City Staff should they have any additional questions or feedback on the proposed development.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

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Marie Ryan  
Chairperson/Facilitator