

PLANNING REPORT



PAC – April 30, 2025
File No.: V-8-25, P.R. No. 31/25

To: Planning Advisory Committee

From: Fredrick Van Rooyen, Senior Planner

Proposal: Additional Temporary use variance to permit the extension of an emergency shelter within the Winners Lounge building on the Fredericton Exhibition Grounds

Property: **355 Smythe Street (PID 01440825)**

OWNER: Fredericton Exhibition Ltd.
PO Box 235 Stn A
Fredericton, NB, E3B 4Y9

APPLICANT: Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc. (The Shelters) c/o Warren Maddox
65 Brunswick Street
Fredericton, NB, E3B 1G5

SITE INFORMATION:

Location: West side of Smythe Street between Saunders Street to the north, walking trail and Waggoners Lane to the south, and Wilmot Street to the west

Context: Exhibition Grounds, Commercial uses to the south on Smythe Street and Waggoners Lane, residential neighbourhoods to the east, north, and west, Multicultural Association and Wilmot Park to the north

Ward No: 10

Municipal Plan: South Core

Zoning: Institutional Exhibition Zone (IEX)

Existing Land Use: Fredericton Exhibition Grounds, Winners Restaurant

Previous Applications: P.R. 99/18, P.R. 79/24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In December 2024, the Applicant received a temporary use variance to permit an emergency shelter within the Winners Lounge building on the Fredericton Exhibition Grounds. The terms and conditions of the approval outlined that “the use shall cease operations on April 30th, 2025”, given that it is typically intended over the winter months. With the expiration date fast approaching, the Applicant has indicated that the demand and community need for an emergency shelter space remains critical. While the emergency shelter has played an important role over the winter months during the colder weather, the demand has continued even as temperatures have increased with the last several weeks operating at 100% capacity.

Regardless of the season, emergency shelter space is an essential form of housing on the continuum for those who are unable to find either permanent housing or access to other shelter space. This extension of the shelter use continues to support housing for vulnerable populations and is located in the Urban Core within close proximity to necessary services.

Over the last several months, the Applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate without significant negative impacts on the surroundings and has been able to connect individuals to the supports they need. Staff are of the view that the extension of the temporary use variance is appropriate for the space and support the application subject to terms and conditions.

APPLICATION:

Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc. has made application on property located at 355 Smythe Street for an additional temporary use variance to permit the extension of an emergency shelter within the Winners Lounge building on the Fredericton Exhibition Grounds.

PLANNING COMMENTS:

Background:

- Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc. (The Shelters) has been running shelters since 1983 and has extensive experience running shelter spaces that are rules based, equitable, fair, and demand as well as accept accountability. Though John Howard Society and The Shelters operate year-round 24 hour a day shelters, the Applicant has noted that over the past several years there is an increased need for a low barrier space. The Shelters has been operating this kind of low barrier space for the past three years and have seen the numbers increase year over year. The first year they operated in the Small Craft Aquatic Centre their capacity numbers ran about 60% expected. Last year their numbers were consistently at 100% and unfortunately had to start turning people away. This has led to capacity concerns between the Applicant and their partners at the Provincial Department of Social Development. Given this capacity concern, the Applicant feels it is prudent to provide a space that allows for greater capacity, greater supports, and increased security. The location at the Small Craft Aquatic Centre is only sufficient for up to 10, but the additional
- shelter space in the Winners Lounge building has been able to provide shelter for 25-30 individuals. Staff would note that Fredericton Exhibition Ltd. (FREX) has provided their consent to the additional temporary use variance application.
- On December 11, 2024, the Planning Advisory Committee approved an initial temporary use variance to permit the emergency shelter within the Winners Lounge building on the Fredericton Exhibition Grounds. As the need at the time was primarily for the winter season to provide space for individuals to get out of the cold, the terms and conditions of the approval outlined that the "use shall cease operations on April 30th, 2025". This has generally been the approach for shelters of this nature, but staff would note that temporary use variances in general are granted for a one-year period.

Proposal:

- The Applicant is proposing to continue operating the emergency shelter within the Winners Lounge building on the Exhibition Grounds until December 10, 2025. The demand and community need for an emergency shelter space remains critical. The space not only provides shelter for those who are unable to find permanent housing or access to other

shelter space in Fredericton but allows the Applicant to continue to work on getting the most challenging individuals to connect in a meaningful way with services and supports that will bring them closer to the goal of having them in permanent housing.

- Operations for the shelter would remain the same for the most part, with additional staff and security providing further support during major event days on the Exhibition Grounds (i.e. Rib Fest, NB Exhibition, etc.). Currently, there are at least two staff members on site at all times and security is 24 hours a day with three security guards on duty at night and one during the day conducting regular patrols, with the scope covering the entire NBEX site. The Applicant's security contractor has also worked closely with the City's Community Safety Services Unit (CSSU) division to address any concerns.
- The shelter space has consistently been operating at 25-30 individuals a night seeking shelter. The operational model for this site is a 12-hour emergency shelter. Staff arrive at about 7:45pm to prepare to open the doors at 8:00pm. The Applicant has arranged for the security to arrive at 7:30pm in anticipation that there may be a queuing starting at 7:30pm. The space operates over the night hours and at 7:00am, the night residents would be woken up, given coffee or tea and asked to start their day. They would then start to move out of the space by 8:00am. This wouldn't be a mass exodus, as the Applicant has found it is a more staggered exit. The security patrols will stay around for an hour after the 8:00am closing to ensure that the residents have moved down to have their breakfast at the Community Kitchens. From there, the day is theirs until the evening when they will queue up again for a cot for the night.
- Guests enter at the rear of the Winners Lounge building on the Fredericton Exhibition Grounds. A 6-foot-high barrier fence along the southern edge of the building has been installed along the back of the racetrack to direct guests and reduce spillover to the rest of the site (see Map II). The Winners Lounge building is located behind the main buildings on the FREX site and has minimal visibility, particularly with the entrance located at the back of the building.
- Over the last several months, the Applicant's operational model has been a success. They have provided critical shelter space, connected individuals with supports and services, and there has not been any significant security concerns or negative impacts to the surroundings.

Municipal Plan:

- The Municipal Plan contains the following policies regarding Emergency/Homeless Shelters:
 - Subsection 3.1.1(5): Develop and maintain relationships with other levels of government, community organizations, the private sector, and others to build community capacity in support of:
 - ii. Housing for vulnerable populations, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and group homes.
 - Subsection 3.1.1(9)(iv): Emergency/Homeless Shelters – Council will consider requests to locate emergency/homeless shelters provided that they are located in the Urban Core within close proximity to necessary services. The subject property is designated South Core within the Municipal Plan, which forms part of the Urban Core.

Overall, the proposal is consistent with the Municipal Plan as it helps build capacity in support of housing for vulnerable populations and the emergency shelter is located in the Urban Core and within close proximity to necessary services.

Zoning & Temporary Use Variance:

- The subject property is zoned Institutional Exhibition (IEX) Zone. As the IEX zone does not permit an emergency shelter a temporary use variance is required. From a zoning perspective, staff would note that emergency shelters are only permitted within the City Centre (CC) Zone and the Institutional Zone Two (I-2) only when located within the Urban Core. While the applicable IEX zone does not permit an emergency shelter, similar to the I-2 zone, it is an institutional zone and is within the Urban Core.
- The *Community Planning Act* allows the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) to authorize a development otherwise prohibited under the by-law for a temporary period not exceeding one year subject to terms and conditions; this was the initial temporary use variance. The *Act* further outlines that PAC can authorize an additional temporary period not exceeding one year subject to terms and conditions; this being the current application. Should the Applicant seek to extend the use beyond the second temporary use variance a zone amendment application would be required. However, staff would emphasize that the NBEX Secondary Municipal Plan calls for redevelopment of the site and establishing a permanent emergency shelter space is not contemplated as part of the Secondary Plan and should not impede the City from implementing such plan.
- Staff are recommending that the terms and conditions of the additional temporary use variance establish an expiration date of December 10, 2025, for the shelter use. This essentially allows the use for a one-year period from the initial temporary use variance, which is typically granted for other temporary uses as per the *Act*. The original terms and conditions established the April 30, 2025, expiration given the original intent for the winter season, but it is clear to that the demand for the shelter space remains critical.
- Planning staff recognize the challenges with operating an emergency shelter and some of the public safety concerns that may arise. Locating such a use is also a challenge given the need to provide shelters in a central location within close proximity to necessary services; which in the case of the Urban Core is a built-up area with established neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, in lieu of a more permanent out of the cold solution within the Urban Core, the continued use of the shelter in the underutilized non-residential building is considered appropriate. The building is generally tucked behind the larger buildings on the FREX site and has limited visibility to the surrounding residential uses. Staff consider the proposal an appropriate temporary location, particularly when compared to a location that would otherwise be within a more residential setting. Staff would emphasize that the Applicant will have a duty to limit off-site impacts and work with surrounding uses/property owners to address any concerns that may arise.

Building Inspection and Public Safety Services:

- A Building Permit was obtained for the necessary fit ups to the Winners Lounge building to ensure all requirements were met for fire and life safety.
- City Police Services have worked with the Applicant on various shelter initiatives over the years, including the existing space at the Small Craft Aquatic Centre, which has been operating for three years. The security protocols that have been put in place have been successful to date and the Applicant will continue to have an ongoing dialogue with all public safety services to address any concerns.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the application submitted by Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc. on property located at 355 Smythe Street for an additional temporary use variance to permit the extension of an emergency shelter within the Winners Lounge building on the Fredericton Exhibition Grounds, be approved subject to the following terms and conditions:

- a) The site be developed generally in accordance with Maps II and III attached to P.R. 31/25 to the satisfaction of the Development Officer;
- b) The use shall cease operations on December 10th, 2025;
- c) No more than 40 guests are permitted at a time;
- d) The hours of operation for the emergency shelter are 8:00pm to 8:00am, seven days a week, with no occupancy outside of those hours other than for maintenance and preparatory purposes;
- e) Proponents will do a daily inspection of the grounds and surrounding area, and any litter or debris associated with the emergency shelter shall be promptly picked up; and,
- f) There shall be at least two appropriately trained staff on hands at all times along with two security personnel.

Prepared by:

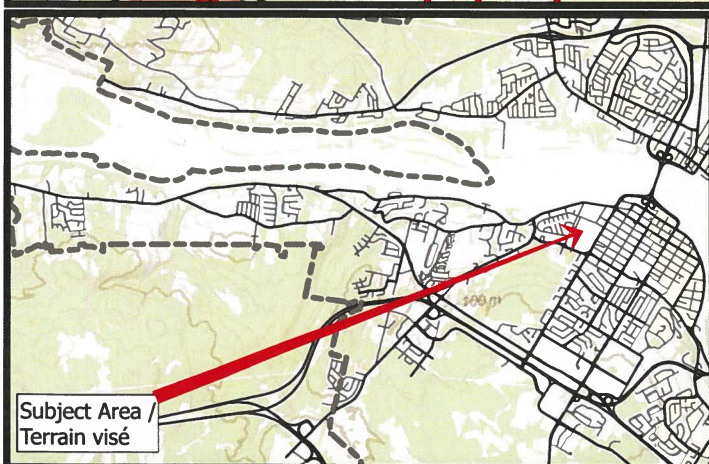
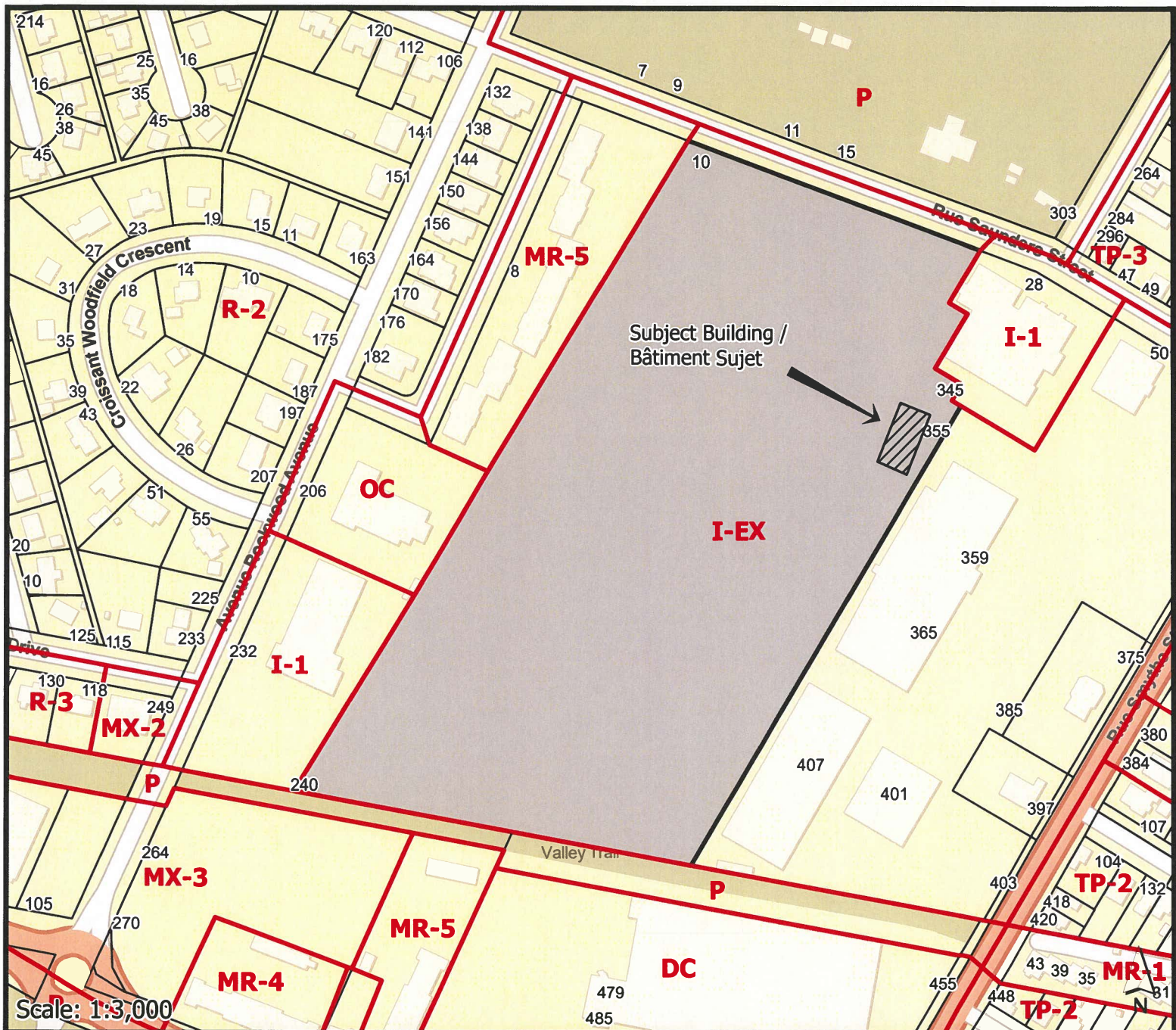


Fredrick Van Rooyen, RPP, MCIP
Senior Planner, Community Planning

Approved by:



Marcello Battilana, RPP, MCIP
Assistant Director, Planning & Development



Subject Property / Propriété Visé

Additional Temporary Use Variance to permit the extension of an emergency shelter within the Winner's Lounge Building on the Exhibition Grounds.

Dérogation d'usage temporaire supplémentaire pour permettre l'utilisation continu d'un refuge d'urgence dans le bâtiment Winner's Lounge au terrain d'exposition.

Community Planning
Planification urbaine

Map \ carte # I
File \ fiche: PR-31-2025
Date \ date: avril \ April 30, 2025
Subject \ sujet: rue 355 Smythe Street
Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc.



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Site Plan / Plan du site

Fredericton

Community Planning
Planification urbaine

Map \ carte # II

File \ fiche: PR-31-2025

Date \ date: avril \ April 30, 2025

Subject \ sujet: rue 355 Smythe Street

Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc.

Murray, Elizabeth

From: Keisha Joyce Wheeler [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 6:03 PM
To: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
Subject: Concerned mother!

External email: Do not follow instructions, click links, open attachments, forward or respond to the email unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I do understand this city needs a more permanent solution for a homeless shelter. However the suggested place being shared is stone throws away from daycares, a park that is constantly overflowing with children.

I am sorry but this is not acceptable.

There are many people in this city whom don't agree but it doesn't seem to matter who doesn't agree it's just going to continue to happen anyways.

A homeless shelter isn't going to stop the drug addicts from being on the streets. Do you think those businesses in the surrounding areas want their garbage rifle through every single night? Do you think the daycare wants to have to worry about the children being outside and people taking kids? Do you think they want to have to worry about needles knives, razor blades, other things on their playground because you have riffraff hanging around that close...

I used to treat them a lot kinder until I had people breaking into my home stealing my thing stealing my daughters things chasing me down the street begging for money harassing me. I'm sorry, but you're enabling this behaviour.

I will also be forwarding this to the MLA's office because somebody needs to do something before this monstrosity happens.

Do you really think it's fair to also put them beside the multicultural building which has immigrants that aren't familiar with Canada aren't familiar with how truly terrifying those people can be and you're just placing them in harms way with them being just steps down the street.....