



August 16, 2026

Edmonton City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City of Edmonton
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2R7

To Mayor Knack and City Council:

Re: 4.14 Bylaw 21559 – To allow for an emergency shelter and wellness facility, Girard Industrial City Council, meeting on August 17, 2026

We are writing on the proposed rezoning of 7011 Girard Road NW to facilitate an emergency shelter and wellness facility. The EDBA is not taking a position on the merits of this specific rezoning application or on the suitability of the proposed site.

We recognize that neighbouring businesses and property owners have expressed concerns regarding safety, security, compatibility with surrounding industrial uses, and potential impacts on their operations and investments. These concerns are understandable and deserve careful consideration and respect.

Our comments instead relate to a broader policy issue.

For many years, Downtown Edmonton and Chinatown have accommodated a disproportionate share of the city's homeless-serving and social support infrastructure. While these services provide essential support to vulnerable Edmontonians, homelessness is not a downtown issue alone. It is a city-wide challenge that requires a city-wide response.

The EDBA therefore supports, in principle, a more balanced and decentralized approach to the distribution of shelters, supportive housing, recovery-oriented services, day spaces, and other forms of social infrastructure across Edmonton. As the city grows, responsibility for supporting vulnerable populations should be shared more broadly across communities rather than concentrated within a small number of neighbourhoods.

At the same time, location alone does not determine whether a shelter is successful within a community.

From our experience downtown, public confidence is often shaped less by the existence of a shelter and more by how it is operated. Neighbouring businesses, residents, and property owners want assurance that operators have the resources, policies, staffing, security measures, and accountability mechanisms necessary to maintain a safe, clean, and welcoming environment.

We encourage Council to continue promoting strong Good Neighbour practices for shelters and other social service facilities. Effective Good Neighbour approaches establish clear expectations, open communication, and shared problem-solving between operators and surrounding stakeholders.



Successful operations actively manage both the needs of their clients and the impacts that may occur in the surrounding area. This includes proactively addressing loitering, litter, graffiti, encampment activity, and other issues that can affect neighbouring properties and public spaces. Equally important is protecting shelter clients themselves, as vulnerable individuals can be at risk of victimization and exploitation. Strong site management benefits both clients and the surrounding community.

For that reason, we encourage Council, for this and any future shelter proposal, to place significant importance on:

- Good Neighbour Plans and ongoing community engagement;
- Active stewardship of surrounding public spaces;
- Prompt response to business and community concerns;
- Measures that minimize impacts on neighbouring properties;
- Strategies that protect vulnerable clients from victimization and exploitation;
- Strong coordination with health, outreach, public safety, and community partners; and
- Ongoing transparency regarding operational outcomes and neighbourhood impacts.

We also believe it is important to recognize the value of the communities being asked to host social infrastructure. Just as the EDBA advocates for the health and vitality of Downtown Edmonton, we appreciate the importance of maintaining strong industrial, commercial, and employment districts throughout the city. These areas support investment, job creation, economic growth, and a municipal tax base that funds essential services relied upon by all Edmontonians.

As Council considers this application and future shelter proposals, we encourage members to continue pursuing a balanced city-wide approach that shares responsibility across Edmonton while ensuring strong operational accountability, meaningful community engagement, and respect for the economic health of host communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James L. Robinson
Executive Director
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