

**Islington Seniors' Shelter
Community Liaison Committee Meeting #4 Summary**

Thistletown Community Centre
Hall Room, 3rd Floor
925 Albion Road, Etobicoke
Tuesday, June 4, 2019
7:00 – 8:30 pm

Community Liaison Committee Meeting #4 Overview

On Tuesday, June 4th, 2019, the Salvation Army hosted the fourth Community Liaison Committee (CLC) meeting for the Islington Senior's Shelter. Eleven (11) people attended the meeting, including local residents, staff from Councillor Michael Ford's Office, the City of Toronto's Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), the Salvation Army, and Swerhun Inc. See Attachment A for the list of participants.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide CLC members with updates related to the shelter, renovations, and naming process; check-in on any community feedback since the April CLC meeting, and discuss opportunities for the shelter and local community to connect over the summer. See Attachment B for the meeting agenda.

A few local residents, who were previously unaware of the shelter and the CLC, attended the meeting. During the facilitated discussion they shared concerns and asked questions about the shelter. Staff from Salvation Army and the City answered questions and provided background information about the shelter.

This meeting summary was prepared by Swerhun Inc., an independent third-party facilitation team supporting the Salvation Army in their engagement with the CLC. It is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript; but rather to capture the key discussion points and meeting outcomes shared at the meeting. A draft of this summary was shared with participants for review prior to being finalized.

Summary of Discussion

As noted above, a few community members, who were previously unaware of the shelter, attended the meeting to share concerns and ask questions directly to the Salvation Army and SSHA staff. Concerns and questions generally related to community safety and the fact that they were not aware of the shelter being located in the community. They also discussed the importance of community education to prevent fear and misconceptions and expressed an interest in volunteering at the shelter and helping to organize donations.

Prior to the facilitated discussion, Bradley Harris, from the Salvation Army, provided an overview about the background of the shelter and community engagement to date. A summary of this overview is included below, followed by a summary of questions and feedback shared by participants at the meeting. Responses provided by the Salvation Army and SSHA are noted in *italics*.

Background and General Shelter-related Updates

- Toronto's homelessness population continues to rise each year. We are approaching over 10,000 people who use and/or are seeking a shelter bed. Last year, 18% of shelter users in the system were 55 years of age or older. There is need in the City for a seniors-focused homeless shelter.
- The City of Toronto purchased this building for the use as a homeless shelter in 2018. The City and its consultants, Swerhun Inc., engaged local community members and organizations from June to December 2018. There was a public open house and tour hosted onsite by the City of Toronto on December 3, 2018. Engagement continues in 2019 through ongoing meetings with the Community Liaison Committee.
- The Salvation Army responded to the City of Toronto's Request for Proposal for a shelter operator and was chosen as the preferred operator through the Request for Proposals process.
- The Islington Seniors' Shelter opened on December 15, 2018 to seniors 55 years old or over. 45 beds opened to residents in the first phase of renovations. The second phase of renovations will take place in 2019 on the first, second, and basement levels. After all renovations are complete, there will be 90 total shelter beds for seniors. The shelter will also include community meeting space on the first floor after all renovations are complete.
- Shelter residents are assigned case management workers who will work with residents to create a care plan. Residents are free to leave the shelter during the day but have to be back in the building by curfew. The shelter provides catered services to residents, which includes three meals and two snacks throughout the day.
- Since opening in December 2018, Islington Seniors' Shelter staff have already successfully housed a few people. Our residents who are housed will continue to receive services through Booth Support Services, who work with residents to keep them housed.
- The architect and consultants have been working with Salvation Army and SSHA to prepare detailed construction drawings for Phase 2. Building permit application is anticipated for the end of June 2019. Demolition of several unoccupied areas in the building has begun and construction is anticipated to commence late summer 2019. Phase 2 of renovations is expected to be complete in 12 months.
- The two adjacent properties behind the shelter building at 7 and 9 Wardlaw Cres have been winterized by the City and will not be occupied by the shelter. We are currently focusing all of the construction and building permits on the shelter building itself. Initial discussions about these properties were to include space for the community such as a dog park and/or seating area. These opportunities will be discussed with the community when the details become available.

Facilitator's Note: CLC members, at this meeting and previously, expressed the importance and interest in providing input on the new outdoor community space.

Community Questions and Feedback

- **What is a room in the shelter like?** *Rooms at the shelter are similar to a bedroom. We have three to four single beds, with a washroom and shower in each room.*
- **Is there medical space in the building?** *We do not have any medical staff at the shelter, but we plan to provide medical space in the building. We have had conversations with the Rexdale Community Health Centre and other agencies in the area to use the space.*
- **How long do seniors usually stay at the shelter?** *It is based on individual experiences. Shelter residents do not become homeless overnight; it is often due to circumstances such as a sudden loss of income and/or employment, or a family breakdown. Residents may have also spent time being homeless before going to a shelter. We triage residents right when they come in to figure out their experiences with homelessness and needs for housing. We try our best to meet our clients' needs, to get them onto the path of housing, and to keep them housed.*
- **What does the Salvation Army do to ensure that shelter residents and neighbours are safe?** *We have staff at the shelter 24 hours a day. Staff are trained to support shelter residents; they're training includes Non-Violent Crisis Intervention. If there is any violence or if we feel that a person would be dangerous in the community, we would call police and/or other services who could help right away. Krystina, our Community Program Coordinator, sits on Division 23's Community Police Liaison Committee, so we have good relationships with the local police division.*
- **What happens if a resident is missing from the shelter?** *Our staff perform room checks every night, and if a person is not in their room the individual will be discharged from the shelter the next day. Sometimes, a resident may decide to leave the shelter entirely without notice. If we are looking for someone in particular, we can check with Central Intake to see if the individual went to another shelter. And if an individual is missing and we feel they pose a danger to themselves or the community, we contact the police.*
- **Who could community members contact if there are any immediate concerns about the shelter?** *Krystina Damyanovich, at (416) 688-5486 or by e-mail: Krystina_Damyanovich@can.salvationarmy.org*
- **Concerns came up because it was hard to find information about the shelter.** *A few participants shared that their concerns rose due to the difficulty in finding more information about the shelter.*
- **Consider offering tours of the shelter to community members.** *A participant suggested that it may be beneficial to community members who have fears and misconceptions about homeless shelters. The City hosted an Open House in December 2018, which also included tours of the building before residents moved in. We have to be mindful of our residents' privacy, as some people may not want others to know they are in a shelter. We are, however, looking to incorporate community space in the building through a new community meeting space, and potentially a community kitchen. We're also exploring volunteer opportunities for community members. Once renovations are complete, we may have an open house in the new community spaces. We have offered tours of the building to different agencies who've come in to see how they may be able to use the space to provide services to residents.*

- **Interest in staying engaged with the CLC and the Salvation Army.** New participants expressed that they are interested in continuing to be involved with the CLC. *The team committed to adding their information to the CLC contact list to ensure they receive future updates, including invitations to future CLC meetings. The team also followed up by email following the meeting to share meeting summaries from the first three CLC meetings.*
- **Interest in volunteering and organizing donations.** Participants expressed an interest in volunteering at the shelter and organizing donations for shelter residents. *The team said they greatly appreciated the offer. They also noted that donation was discussed in detail at a previous CLC meeting, where the Salvation Army provided a list of the types of donations shelter residents can use. The list is included 2nd CLC meeting summary.*

Summer Activities and other Volunteer Opportunities

Matthew asked participants about any summer activities and/or opportunities that the shelter may get involved with. Participants discussed several opportunities including:

- **Fusion of Taste Festival** hosted by the Albion-Islington Square Business Improvement Area. The Salvation Army shared that they've been in contact with the BIA to discuss how shelter residents may be part of the event; and possibly set up an inconspicuous donation area during the festival.
- **Community Trash Pick-up Event.** A participant suggested that the community may be organizing a neighbourhood trash pick-up event, and that shelter residents could potentially help out with the event.
- **Paint night.** A participant suggested that she might be able to connect with a local school for donated painting canvasses and other paint supplies to run a paint night. Bradley shared that they also have paint nights at the Gateway shelter where they invite a local artist to paint alongside residents.
- **Community BBQ.** A participant suggested that the Salvation Army could host a community barbeque to introduce residents to some neighbours.

Shelter Naming Update

Maureen Houlihan from SSHA gave a brief update on the shelter renaming process:

- The CLC have discussed and provided a few names at and after the previous CLC meeting. The Salvation Army has also engaged its residents about a new name for the shelter.
- The City and the Salvation Army are currently in the process shortlisting a few potential names. Currently, it seems that the new name will land on something related to the neighbourhood followed by "Seniors' Residence".
- The City will then bring a short list of three names to the local Councillor for consideration.
- The team may be able to bring a shortlist to the next CLC for discussion before it goes to the Councillor.

A participant shared that the neighbourhood is called Albion Gardens, which is not a part of Rexdale. Another participant shared that she has heard Albion Gardens used interchangeably with Thistle town.

Next Steps

Matthew thanked participants for attending the meeting shared that the next CLC meeting will likely take place in September 2019 and the team will notify CLC members as soon as a date is confirmed. He also noted that the facilitation team will share a draft meeting summary with participants for review before it is finalized and posted to the Salvation Army's website.

Attachment A. Participant List

Participants:

Ashley Brown, *Local Resident*
Danielle Xavier, *Local Resident*
Lizia Renna, *Local Resident*
Lucie Cirone, *Local Resident*
Nicolas Di Marco, *Councillor Michael Ford's Office*

The Salvation Army Staff:

Bradley Harris, *Executive Director, Toronto Housing and Homeless Supports*
Mauricio Urtecho, *Shelter Director*
Krystina Damyanovich, *Community Program Coordinator*

City of Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration Staff:

Maureen Houlihan, *Housing Consultant, Housing Stability Services*

Swerhun Inc. Facilitation Team:

Matthew Wheatley
Jacky Li

Attachment B. Meeting Agenda

Community Liaison Committee Meeting #4 Islington Seniors' Shelter

Thistletown Community Centre - 925 Albion Road, Etobicoke
304 Hall Room – 3rd Floor
Tuesday, June 4, 2019
7:00 – 8:30 pm

Meeting Purpose

- Provide general shelter-related updates and specific updates on the naming process and building renovations.
- Check-in on any community feedback since the April CLC meeting.
- Discuss opportunities for the shelter and local community to connect over the summer.

Proposed Meeting Agenda

- 7:00 pm** **Introductions & Agenda Review**
Matthew Wheatley, Swerhun Inc.
- 7:05** **General Shelter & Community Update**
*Bradley Harris, Mauricio Urtecho,
Krystina Damyanovich, Salvation Army*
- Any community feedback regarding the shelter since the April 2nd CLC meeting?
- 7:25** **Shelter Renovations Update**
Salvation Army
- 7:35** **Shelter Naming Process Update**
*Maureen Houlihan, SSHA
Bradley Harris, Salvation Army*
- 7:55** **Summer Activity Discussion**
All
- 8:25** **Wrap-up**
Matthew Wheatley, Swerhun Inc.
- 8:30 pm** **Adjourn**

Contact:

If you have any additional feedback, please contact the facilitation team:

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