



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Relocation of Cornerstone Place Shelter

Date:	June 20, 2014
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
Wards:	15, 17, 21
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

Cornerstone Place is a 50-bed men's purchase of service shelter located at 833 St. Clair Avenue West in Ward 21. The property has been sold to a developer and the shelter must vacate the facility in the very near future. The developer is working closely with Cornerstone, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), and the local ward councillor to support the residents staying at the current site for as long as possible. A proposed new location has been identified at 616 Vaughan Road, in Ward 15, which requires Council approval in order to proceed.

If Council approves the new location for the shelter, SSHA will work in cooperation with the local ward councillor to conduct a community meeting for area residents to discuss the planned shelter location.

In order to ensure service continuity for the men at Cornerstone, Cornerstone Baptist Tabernacle has offered the use of space at 21 Blackthorn Avenue in Ward 17 as a temporary, emergency shelter site until the location at 616 Vaughan Road is ready for occupancy. SSHA staff support this interim solution. If this temporary site cannot be utilized, the residents of Cornerstone would be absorbed into the available beds within the rest of the men's shelter system and the staff at Cornerstone would likely have to be laid off until the new location is ready for occupancy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, recommends that:

1. City Council approve the permanent relocation of Cornerstone Place Shelter at 616 Vaughan Road, subject to:
 - a. Cornerstone Place providing a business case that demonstrates the viability of the shelter's operations at the new location, to the satisfaction of the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration; and
 - b. a community meeting being conducted in accordance with the requirement of the Municipal Shelter By-law 138-2003.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report have no impact on the 2014 Approved Operating Budget for SSHA. Funding in the amount of \$766,500.00 for the ongoing operation of Cornerstone Place Shelter was approved by Council as part of the 2014 SSHA Operating Budget process. Any additional operating costs resulting from the relocation of Cornerstone Place will be considered in the overall funding envelope for Hostel Services as part of the 2015 Operating Budget process.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

Equity Impact

The emergency shelter system in Toronto serves equity-seeking groups such as seniors, people with disabilities, individuals with mental health issues, the working poor, and other vulnerable groups. Effective operation of the shelter system is important in ensuring that temporary accommodation is available to a variety of equity-seeking groups.

DECISION HISTORY

The City of Toronto is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for housing and homelessness services, as designated by the provincial *Housing Services Act*. In this capacity, the City provides program funding to community agencies for shelter services.

Part of the City's responsibility in this role is to ensure suitable levels of service for homeless individuals and to maintain an accessible shelter system through the monitoring of occupancy levels and ensuring the existence of an adequate number of shelter beds.

The *2014-2019 Housing Stability Services Planning Framework*, unanimously adopted by City Council in December 2013, outlines SSHA's commitment to maintaining a strong shelter system.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD25.10>

The 2014 funding allocations for all purchase of service shelters, including bed capacities and maximum contract values, were approved by City Council on April 1, 2014. The report can be found at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-67381.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Cornerstone Place Shelter is a 50-bed emergency shelter program serving single men, located at 833 St. Clair Avenue West in Ward 21. It is a former Out of the Cold site that was converted to a permanent shelter in 2001 and operates as an overnight program between the hours of 5:30 PM and 7:30 AM. Cornerstone Place is an important component of the overall men's shelter system.

In July 2012, the agency's Executive Director informed SSHA that the building had been sold to a developer, with a closing date in late September of 2012. The building was owned by Cornerstone Baptist Tabernacle and was home to the church on the first floor and the Cornerstone Shelter on the second floor. The Cornerstone Baptist Tabernacle has since purchased a new church site located at 21 Blackthorn Avenue in Ward 17 and has vacated the building on St. Clair Avenue West. The shelter entered into a lease with the purchaser of the St. Clair Avenue West property, Rockport Corporation, and continued shelter operations as a tenant of the new owner since redevelopment of the site was not going to be immediate.

In late May 2014, it came to the attention of SSHA that Cornerstone Place Shelter may be required to move as early as June 30, 2014. Rockport has extended the lease of the agency on two occasions to allow the agency more time to relocate, but is now in possession of demolition permits for the property and is on a tight timeline to ensure key development activities can proceed in advance of the winter season. Since 2012, the agency has been searching for available properties for lease or purchase and SSHA has been assisting the agency in screening suitable properties based on the requirements of the Municipal Shelter By-law and the space requirements as outlined in the Toronto Shelter Standards. The agency has an offer to purchase a property at 616 Vaughan Road in Ward 15.

COMMENTS

The proposed site for the new Cornerstone Place Shelter at 616 Vaughan Road is a 6,500 square foot building with a vacant bar on the main floor and apartments on the second floor. The entire building is currently vacant. SSHA has assessed the proposed site and

staff believe it has potential for use as a shelter, with some minor renovations. The apartments on the second floor also offer a number of opportunities for improved service to shelter residents including smaller, more private accommodations and the potential for some transitional housing units.

In order to establish a shelter at this location in compliance with the Municipal Shelter By-law, Council approval is required for the new site. The agency has an offer in place to purchase the property, but cannot proceed with certainty until this approval is received. SSHA staff have consulted with the local ward councillor and will be working closely with him to conduct a community meeting ahead of any relocation. The intent of the community meeting would be to provide reassurances to the community that the location will be well managed and not have a significant impact on the neighbourhood. Once Council approves the site and a community meeting is held, the site would then be in compliance with all requirements of the by-law.

City staff have spoken to and met with representatives of Rockport Developers on a number of occasions, and have explained the City's process to assist Cornerstone to secure alternative space so they can move forward with their plans for the St. Clair Avenue site. Rockport has been cooperative in accommodating Cornerstone's needs over the past two years and has offered the assistance of their contractors to quickly renovate any alternative space that is secured for use by Cornerstone. Rockport is clearly concerned about the possibility that the residents of the shelter will be displaced, but has also identified the significant and costly delays they will incur should they not be able to move forward with their plans this summer. However, they continue to show some flexibility in terms of timeframes to allow the agency to secure space and avoid displacing residents. The developer's concerns have also been expressed to the local Ward 21 councillor who Rockport has been working with since purchasing the site in 2012.

Following Council approval of the new location for Cornerstone, there is likely to be a time lag of a few months from the date that Cornerstone vacates its current premises until the new location is ready for occupancy. Cornerstone Baptist Tabernacle has indicated that the shelter could use the basement of their new property at 21 Blackthorn Avenue in Ward 17. From a staff perspective, this would be the preferred option and would minimize service disruption to the shelter's clients and employment disruption to their staff. SSHA staff have been trying to meet with the ward councillor to confirm his support for this temporary solution. The alternative to the temporary use of 21 Blackthorn Avenue would be a temporary suspension of Cornerstone Place's service and capacity until the new location is ready for occupancy. This would mean temporarily absorbing the Cornerstone Place residents in the remainder of the men's shelter sector until the new location is ready. This option is not preferable as it reduces the number of available beds in the shelter system, would cause Cornerstone to temporarily lay off staff and interrupt the support that those staff provide to assist the residents' transition towards housing stability.

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SIGNATURE

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