

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM35.14	ACTION			Ward: 10
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Support for the Residents of Bellwoods House - by Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Planning and Housing Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton, recommends that:

1. City Council request the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to pause the process of ending the lease at Bellwoods House, 63 Bellwoods Avenue, and review options to continue the program while necessary repairs are undertaken.
2. City Council request the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, in the event that Bellwoods House cannot be safely occupied while necessary repairs are undertaken, to report back on plans to relocate the service and shelter capacity to an alternative nearby location.
3. City Council request the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat, in consultation with General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, in the event that Bellwoods House cannot be safely occupied while necessary repairs are undertaken and the program is relocated nearby, to approach the Church of Saint Matthias to explore opportunities to support making renovations to Bellwoods House in order accommodate a successful and accessible new permanent shelter or housing program in that location, and to report back to the Planning and Housing by the fourth quarter of 2021 with recommendations.

Summary

The Anglican Church of Saint Matthias, Bellwoods, has hosted a City-operated women's shelter program at Bellwoods House (63 Bellwoods Avenue) for many years. Recently, the Church was advised that the City plans to end its lease of the space.

The potential loss of this important service in our community is concerning. There are currently three residents living at Bellwoods House, and when physical distancing guidelines are not in effect, the capacity is ten residents. It is a flexible-long term shelter for women over the age of 50 who have been homeless for a long time, and staff are on site 24 hours each day.

I understand that City staff have identified the need for significant building renovations to support the continued safe use of Bellwoods House, including mould removal, accessibility improvements, and major building system repairs such as furnace and air conditioning.

The City of Toronto should explore every opportunity to support these critical renovations and return shelter and housing services to Bellwoods House. Due to high and rising property values in Toronto, especially downtown, it is rare to find a partner like the Church of Saint Matthias that is interested in hosting these important services. We should work to find a way to keep these services in the neighbourhood.

In addition, every effort must be taken to support the transition of the current residents of Bellwoods House to comparable and suitable shelter programs in the neighborhood. The pandemic is not over yet, needs across Toronto are heightened, and many other services and supports are still being provided through alternative means or temporarily suspended.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM35.14