Seniors Deputation from Woods Manor

Economic Community Development Committee

Woods Manor is a low-income seniors residence that is part of TSHC. My name is Nadine Strople and I am a resident of Woods Manor, a TSHC building. I am here representing the 145 other residents that already fear for our safety and have not been receiving the support and services from TSHC we require. I have spent 15 months trying to get help to address issues that the building is having due to a drug dealer (also a senior) that lives in our building and has brought extreme mental distress and fear to me and others as a result of his criminal activity in the building. I've requested a transfer to another unit on a different floor from him, but my request was acknowledged with "you can apply, but you won't get it". There are specific reasons for transfers to be approved, but living two doors from a drug dealer isn't one of them.

There is a group, Food For Now, that sets up outside the building and blocks the entrances and inhibits folks with scooters and canes from accessing the building. We cannot access taxis and wheel trans when they are here. The police can't help us. When I have called the Special Constables it takes hours for them to show up, if at all. This agenda item focuses on residents' ability to access services and maintaining safety. We need help, and have needed help for more than a year, but have not gotten it. I am speaking today to bring your attention to some of the safety concerns that 145 vulnerable seniors have been left to deal with alone.

It is for these reasons that I, and the dozens of the residents that signed these letters, are extremely afraid of the shelter being proposed only 9m from our senior housing complex. Woods Manor is full of vulnerable seniors - some cannot navigate government documents or forms for lack of English, most do not have computers, smart phones, or the internet and many are fearful to share their opinions on this matter. Many of the residents are fearful because they receive government support. This issue has galvanized the building. We have seen what damage one drug dealer can do to our safety, mental health, and emotional well-being.

TSHC has not helped in any of the safety issues I have mentioned already, despite residents imploring for help. As a result I do not have any faith that TSHC will be able to maintain my, nor my neighbours', safety when an 80-100 bed emergency homeless shelter with harm reduction is built within 9m of our balconies, down the street from a park, beside a bungalow, and near schools and daycares.

Our community is already grappling with a high crime rate. The single drug dealer in our building has made me afraid to leave my apartment even in the daytime when I hear his associates banging on his door and yelling to get in. A shelter that distributes drug paraphernalia for use outside its facility—like harm reduction sites do—contributes to increased unsafe behavior, especially given the high percentage of shelter residents struggling with addiction and mental health issues. This would escalate the safety concerns we are already experiencing..

Furthermore, the proposed shelter beside Woods Manor will negatively impact local businesses. Us seniors, many of whom have mobility challenges, we rely on businesses that are within a 3-4 block

radius. If these businesses close it would be detrimental to our survival. I have spoken with several local business owners who say they will leave the area for fear of the impact of criminal activity. This agenda item looks at how the city will help TSHC feel safe and access services. If the local businesses close and leave how will this help us access our services and keep us safe and healthy?

I have already stressed how my, and my neighbours', mental health and well-being has been severely impacted by the crime in our building. . Continuous construction of the shelter will impact our health in an extreme and negative way from the constant noise, dust, trucks and exhaust etc. Health, mental health, EMS, and police services in New Toronto are oversaturated and struggling to meet the needs of the current population. LAMP Community has a 6-8 month wait list just to see if you'll be taken on as a patient. Adding 80-100 additional people to this area, many with complex health and mental health challenges, would further overwhelm these services.

Concentrating shelters in lower-income neighborhoods like New Toronto, and more specifically 9 meters from a low-income seniors residence, perpetuates systemic inequities. Many of my neighbours aren't comfortable speaking up about this for fear of reprisal or a negative impact on their own housing situation.

The act of not having a safe place to live doesn't make a person dangerous, but we need to speak realistically and look at what we know and have learned from other similar situations. People coming and going through central intake and no sobriety requirements among a population that, unfortunately, has a high rate of addiction, is a recipe for disaster that will lead to unsafe and dangerous situations for the vulnerable people here.

In conclusion, I urge the city to:

-Cancel the proposed shelter and authorize City Staff to find an alternative location.

-Actually listen to residents at Woods Manor. We already have drug and safety issues. Help us. Make it safe.