

# FATIMA HOUSE COMMUNITY BULLETIN

## FATIMA HOUSE (1059 COLLEGE STREET) COMMUNITY BULLETIN #2

November 30, 2020

This is the second community bulletin for Fatima House, a women's shelter that is relocating to 1059 College Street. These bulletins are intended to share information and updates about Fatima House based on questions or comments that are raised by the community through the project email address, voicemail, and through Councillor Bailão's office.

Community bulletins will be issued about once a month and posted on the [project website](#). If you would like to sign up to receive the bulletins by email or would like to share your questions or comments with us, send an email to [clc.1059college@gmail.com](mailto:clc.1059college@gmail.com) or leave a voicemail at (437) 522-9510.

This bulletin was written by the Dept of Words & Deeds, a third-party community facilitator retained by the City of Toronto to carry out the community engagement process for Fatima House. It was written with input from City of Toronto staff and the shelter operator, Fred Victor.

## CONTENTS

Community Liaison Committee

Offers of Support

FAQs:

1. About choosing the site
2. About programs and operations within Fatima House
3. About safety, security and public health
4. About the design of the building
5. About other nearby services

## COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE (CLC)

The purpose of the Fatima House Community Liaison Committee (CLC) is to support the positive transition of Fatima House residents into the community; to create positive relationships; and to work towards resolving common challenges as they arise. The CLC is composed of representatives from local organizations from the community.

The CLC is not a decision-making body; it is an advisory group. The group will work together to provide guidance and advice to Fred Victor. The CLC also provides an opportunity for community and business groups to learn about homelessness and about how they can contribute to the success of Fatima House as a valuable community asset.

The group currently has seven confirmed members and more members are welcome. Potential members should be community-minded and should represent a group or a community sector and act as a liaison between that group and Fatima House. If you are interested in joining the CLC or in being connected with a CLC member who can represent your interests in the group, please email [clc.1059college@gmail.com](mailto:clc.1059college@gmail.com).

The CLC had its first meeting on November 10th, 2020 and will meet again during the second week of December. At its first meeting the CLC discussed the composition of the Committee itself and its role. People then shared concerns they had heard from the broader community as well as ideas for welcoming the shelter and transitioning people into the community. The following topics were discussed:

- Clarity around the building and the permanence of the shelter service: the beauty of the building itself was discussed as well as the longevity of the shelter use. Fred Victor confirmed that they have a 5 year lease that is renewable up to 15 years.
- Security questions and concerns: Security cameras are present and will be monitored. The site is staffed 24/7. The use of security guards is not anticipated to be needed and this will be re-visited if necessary.
- Rules and regulations for residents: For the women who live at the shelter, it is their home while they are there. Residents commit to house rules during their stay and staff work with them to address any issues or concerns. If a placement is not working, Fred Victor seeks alternate arrangements so no one is ever discharged to the street.
- Support for people in distress: The committee discussed ways to support people in distress including sharing resources about nearby support services and setting up clear ways to communicate with Fatima House. City staff cautioned that Fatima House staff are not responsible for addressing issues within a particular catchment area but are responsible for the shelter itself and noted that issues that may arise in the neighbourhood may be unconnected to the shelter. The CLC discussed developing communication resources to help area residents know who to call in different circumstances.
- Neighbourhood relations: Fred Victor staff will do walkabouts in the neighbourhood with CLC members to meet local businesses (taking COVID protocols into account). Options for having neighbourhood groups use meeting space within Fatima House are up for discussion, pending COVID restrictions.

## OFFERS OF SUPPORT

### Neighbourhood extends a warm welcome to Fatima House

As Fatima House prepares to open its doors in December, the neighbourhood and community have stepped up to offer what can only be described as an outpouring of support with offers to make donations, offers to volunteer, and expressions of encouragement to welcome Fatima House to Gladstone and College. Fred Victor is humbled by this reception and is very grateful for every welcoming gesture the shelter has received.

Fred Victor is reviewing all the offers of support and is working with the CLC to set some parameters for the kinds of support that are most needed. This needs to take into account the current COVID-19 protocols which will impose restrictions on having anyone besides residents and staff inside the house, as well as the existing programming and the particular needs of the women who will be residing at the shelter.

Fatima House is the relocation of an existing shelter program that is currently housed at 86 Lombard Street. Although grateful for the community's generosity, many residents may need some time to settle into a quiet and safe place to live while they receive support for finding more permanent housing.

Fatima House has a five year renewable lease on the property and anticipates making 1059 College Street its home for a long time. Opportunities to volunteer or support the shelter will evolve and change as the pandemic is brought under control. At the moment, the kinds of things that are most needed at the shelter are contributions to the welcome baskets that are being prepared and expressions of interest in supporting the shelter through drives, donations and volunteering.

### Welcome Baskets

Receiving a welcome basket is a great way for the women to celebrate their new space and feel a part of their new community.

To create a Welcome Basket, fill a basket, (perhaps a small laundry basket) with the new items such as:

- Hygiene items (shampoo, conditioner, tooth brush, toothpaste, lip balm, lotion, brush or comb, mirror/compact)
- Treats that are premade and packaged (ex: chocolates or hard candy)
- Notepad and pen, deck of cards, adult colouring book and markers
- Warm winter items (hat, mitts, scarf, socks, warm slippers)

Finish the basket with a welcoming note card such as "Welcome to the neighbourhood" or "I am happy you are here." Please contact Katy Scherer at Fred Victor at [kscherer@fredvictor.org](mailto:kscherer@fredvictor.org) or (416) 364-8228 extension 1384 to confirm a date and time to drop off a welcome basket.

### Drives

Individuals or groups have reached out asking if they can hold a drive such as underwear drives, drives to make hygiene kits, welcome baskets, food etc. Fred Victor will indicate which drive is most needed and give the supporter all the information they need to have a successful drive including information about Fred Victor and the program site, how to hold the drive and what to do when the drive is complete.

### Donations

Fatima House, like other Fred Victor program sites, will accept donations. They ask that you connect with Fatima House first to find out what is needed and to coordinate drop-off. Fred Victor does not provide pick up of donated items.

## Volunteering

Many of Fred Victor's Program Sites have volunteers. Some of these volunteers assist with food preparation and packaging, gardening, art and yoga. Some locations may have volunteers who assist staff with the daily running of the program.

Anyone who volunteers with Fred Victor completes an onboarding process that includes a Sterling BackCheck, Vulnerable Sector Screening and Orientation.

Fatima House will welcome volunteers from the community. Once the women have settled into Fatima House and COVID-19 restrictions ease, they will determine what type of volunteering is the best fit during their house and staff meetings. This will evolve and change as women and leave and new women move in. Interested volunteers will be added to a list and contacted by Fred Victor when volunteer opportunities arise.

Inquiries and offers of support or donations for Fatima House can be sent to:  
Katy Scherer, Senior Manager of Community Engagement for Fred Victor  
Email: [kscherer@fredvictor.org](mailto:kscherer@fredvictor.org)  
Phone: 416-364-8228 x 1384

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

[Community Bulletin #1](#) responded to questions about Fatima House in general, about COVID-19 protocols and about the community engagement process for moving the shelter.

This edition of the bulletin addresses questions that came up at the Community Information Session held on October 29, 2020 as well as inquiries received through our email address at [clc.1059college@gmail.com](mailto:clc.1059college@gmail.com). These include questions about choosing the site, questions about the programs and operations within Fatima House, questions about safety, security and public health, about the design of the building and about other nearby services.

### 1. About choosing this site:

#### a. How was the site chosen and what is the ownership arrangement?

The developer of the property approached Fred Victor to let them know that this property was becoming available and to let them know that he was willing to enter into an arrangement to build and to create shelter spaces for their women's program that needed to relocate. Fred Victor has worked with this developer in the past. Fred Victor and the developer discussed this plan with the City and the City agreed to provide the required funding for Fred Victor to operate this program as it met with the required zoning requirements and met shelter by-law requirements. The lease between the property owner and Fred Victor was signed at the end of the summer 2020 and once that was done the project team immediately started working on communicating with the community. Fred Victor has a 5 year renewable lease on the site.

#### b. Why does the shelter need to go to the Committee of Adjustment and why was it built before the minor variance was issued?

Answer from Fred Victor: What we need is a minor variance to the floor space index so we can use the full space on the third floor. The existing shape and size of the building won't change – we will just get full permission to use the third floor if the variance is granted. Our landlord was under the impression that we just needed a building permit for the renovations and could do that without a variance but in meetings with the City, we learned that we needed to get the variance. The landlord has made an application to the Committee of Adjustment. For further clarity, the use of the site as a shelter is already permitted under the zoning, and is not part of this minor variance request.

c. How was it determined that this building can accommodate 52 beds?

Answer from Fred Victor: The property meets the shelter by-law and is a permitted use. Zoning bylaws and requirements vary across the city. The zoning bylaw does not have a limit on the number of permitted beds at this location, but it does have a limit on the gross floor area that can be permitted to be occupied and is relative to the number of clients and staff who may be in the building at any given point in time during a day. The 52 beds calculated is in using the pre-COVID shelter standards. It is acknowledged that use of the 3rd floor space does require us to go to the Committee of Adjustment for use of that space. We can occupy the basement, first and second floor under current zoning - 42 clients could be accommodated at pre-COVID standards, and 25 during COVID.

d. This neighbourhood is quite different than the neighbourhood around the existing shelter at Lombard Street. Does the staff of this facility have an understanding of the difference between the two types of neighbourhoods, and how are they adapting their model to suit our neighbourhood?

Answer from Fred Victor: Our staff are skilled not only in offering support for the clients/residents of Fatima House but also in understanding the unique configurations of the neighbourhood they are entering. A Community Liaison Committee has been formed and that will be the forum to discuss issues that may arise between the shelter and the community. Fred Victor has a good track record of maintaining good relationships with its neighbours near the Lombard site and expects to build the same good community relations in this neighbourhood. Fred Victor will also have a dedicated staff whose purpose is to work with the local neighbours on managing and helping to resolve issues that may arise from the shelter.

2. About programs and operations within Fatima House:

a. How are women selected to be in the program and are children allowed?

Answer from Fred Victor: We don't pick and choose the women who can come into our shelter as we are an emergency shelter. Women will be referred through the City's Central Intake call centre, through referrals from other shelters and agencies, or if there is space in the shelter, through walk in referrals. If a person identifies as female they are welcome if we have a space available, as long as they are over 16 years of age. Children are not allowed in the shelter. It is for adult women who are 16 years of age or older.

b. Do residents have to leave the shelter during the day and do they need to be back at a certain time? Will it be noisy at night?

Answer from Fred Victor: There is no requirement to leave the shelter at all. In fact, we encourage people to stay because of COVID and there will be programming happening onsite. However, people may need to come and go as they have other things to do in their lives such as appointments or to see potential housing. We currently have a curfew of 11:00 pm and that is not going to change when we move to our new site. So residents are expected to be in by 11:00 pm and staff do rounds during their shift to make sure that everything is good and everything is safe. Staff will also be able to address any after-hours or obtrusive noise.

c. Where does the name Fatima House come from?

Answer from Fred Victor: The owner of the property wanted to help Fred Victor create a safe welcoming space for women who are homeless and in need of support. He decided to name it after his mother, Fatima, who passed away recently.

d. Will the residents have access to computers or tablets to participate in online programs; especially during COVID?

Answer from Fred Victor: Yes. There is a common computer that residents can use. We will also work with donors to see if we can access other devices for people to use. We were able to secure this type of donation at another site.

e. Will you have culturally sensitive mental health counsellors for non-English speaking residents?

Answer from Fred Victor: Yes, we will. We have a large variety of programs within Fred Victor and we are an email or a phone call away from finding support for language and culture interpretation. We often get multiple responses and offers of help, both in-person and by phone. We cross multiple cultures and are able to reach out and say we're looking for this specific support.

f. Will there be a safe injection site at this shelter? Wouldn't it be safer if they were allowed to use onsite and not have to find somewhere else to go.

Answer from Fred Victor: No, there is no safe injection site at this shelter. Drug use is not permitted at the site at all. Residents and staff worked together to make this decision a number of years ago. We haven't had a long history of substance users onsite. That's something we can discuss with the City if we need to but right now the decision stands no use on site. We do provide harm reduction supplies and we will assist people in getting to a safe injection site if they need to. If they're late for curfew because of that we'll work with them and make sure they're safe.

g. How long will people live at the shelter and where will they go after?

Answer from Fred Victor: We usually start with a stay of 90 days. In that 90 days residents would meet with a case manager one on one and create a plan. Housing is the primary goal but we also look at employment or funding and mental health or addiction support. Residents meet with support workers at least once a month; usually more often. No one is kicked out. Affordable housing is at a premium and hard to find. For some that means staying with us for



6 months or 9 months.

h. Does Fred Victor have a religious mandate and are the staff unionized?

Answer from Fred Victor: Though Fred Victor has historic association with the United Church, we do not take a religious stand and we work with all folks and all people. Yes, staff have been unionized for the last seven years. We also have management on-site and access to agency staff to fill shifts as needed.

i. What is being done to support residents in getting into the workforce with real-life training?

Answer from Fred Victor: We offer a variety of programs and services to residents of the shelters to help people develop practical and transferable skills, establish networks, and connect to relevant resources and information. In addition to creating opportunities for hands-on training and work experience, we also strive to address individual issues that may act as a barrier to employment, including health and housing. Fred Victor operates an Employment Training Centre that offers one-on-one support with an Employment Specialist and a personal action plan to support career goals. The Community Liaison Committee is interested in discussing opportunities to link local businesses with shelter residents and staff to see whether any employment or training connections can be formed.

j. Will there be constant line-ups of women on the street waiting to get in, similar to what happens at the Scott Mission?

Answer from Fred Victor: Fatima House is an emergency shelter, not a drop in program. Shelter residents will not have to line up outside to access services. Meals and services inside the shelter are available for the residents only. Programming that will be taking place in the building will be for the benefit of the current residents only. This includes meal services, clinical and mental health and housing supports.

3. About safety, security and public health:

a. What COVID precautions do you have in place for residents considering that the risk of outbreaks is high in shelters?

Answer from Fred Victor: We have a standard Fred Victor COVID-19 client screening tool that is administered by staff and takes place at the front entrance. All residents are screened daily and anytime they come and go. We also require residents to wear masks while they are inside and to maintain proper physical distance. All Fred Victor staff are required to wear a mask and each program is supplied with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

b. What happens when someone doesn't pass the health screening?

Answer from Fred Victor: We will arrange for the person to go and get tested for COVID and we'll arrange for transportation to a testing center. They will then be transferred to an isolation centre until they have their results and we will hold their bed during that time. So far every single result that we've had this year has been negative and then they can come back. If the test result is positive, they would stay in the isolation center and be cared for there. We

would not hold their bed for that length of time if they do test positive. However, they could be referred back to us if we have a bed available, or to another shelter, where there is a space available for them once they are ready to return.

c. What sort of security is being provided for women fleeing violence?

Answer from Fred Victor: It is a 24/7 facility and staff are trained in issues of violence, domestic violence and trauma. We have security cameras onsite as well. That said, we are not a Violence Against Women shelter and we will make referrals to one of those shelters when needed as they have heightened security, a closer connection to the police, and enhanced trauma support. The City also requires controlled access to all shelter locations. The front door is always locked and people have to buzz to get in. At Fatima House, once someone comes inside they are then in a locked vestibule where they can speak to staff, be assessed and then they can come into the house.

d. I'm concerned about discarded needles.

Answer from Fred Victor: We take safety very seriously and that includes collecting discarded needles if they do appear. We also do a walk-through with each resident and have them sign a Community Relations Contract to be sure they understand what the expectations are for being part of the community. We want people to be a part of the community and that means respecting the community and our neighbours as well.

About the design of the building:

e. Why is there a big fence around the property? It is quite elaborate and dominates the corner. Why is the entrance on Gladstone and not on College?

Answer from Fred Victor: This was a decision made by the landlord and we're happy to take feedback about it. The fence is perhaps a bit high, but it's permeable - you can see through it. Some of it is to offer a bit of privacy and I think there may be an opportunity to soften it a bit with some planting to make it less obtrusive. The fence is built inside the property line and we can re-visit its configuration if it becomes an issue with neighbouring private properties.

The main entrance to the building was already on Gladstone before the renovations. That location for the entrance offers the best way to manage people coming and going from the building as there are security and COVID-screening requirements as people enter the building. Staff can monitor the entrance and also assist people if they require the use of the elevator.

f. Is there any outdoor space for the residents?

Answer from Fred Victor: Yes, there is a small outdoor space on the side of the building that can be used as a smoking area. There is also a 3rd floor deck space for community meals and a seating area.

g. How big are the rooms and are they accessible?

Answer from Fred Victor: The rooms are small but they are an improvement over our current location and it's certainly our desire to offer more livable situations. Some rooms are meant



for two people with shared bathrooms and we also have a number of single rooms with their own bathroom. There's a tremendous dignity that goes with having one's own bathroom. The building is fully accessible with a ramp out front, an elevator inside, and several rooms with fully accessible showers and fixtures.

#### h. Will the building include amenity space for the broader community?

Answer from Fred Victor: The building has some gathering spaces inside including a meeting space on the third floor. Fred Victor intends to have these spaces be used not only for programming activities for the residents of Fatima House but also as bookable spaces for the neighbouring community. Details and logistics in how these spaces would be used or made accessible is being discussed with the newly-formed Community Liaison Committee. Fred Victor is very open to figuring out what is helpful for the community and the shelter.

#### 4. About other nearby services:

##### a. How will Fatima House interact with Sistering on Bloor?

Answer from Fred Victor: We have collaborated with Sistering on a few projects and we have a track record of coordinating services with the women's drop-in downtown on Adelaide Street. We will often have the same women using the services and plan to work closely together. The Manager at Fatima House will be reaching out to them to see what we can do together. That service is a drop-in; not a shelter and so our services are different. A representative from Sistering has been invited to sit on the Community Liaison Committee.