

3 Park Home Ave - Proposed Refugee Welcome Centre

Community Information Session 1 – Summary

July 18, 2022, 6:30 to 8:30pm

1.0 Overview

On Wednesday, July 18, 2022, the City of Toronto's Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (SSHA) Division hosted an online session to share information and answer questions about the use of 3 Park Home Ave. as temporary housing for refugees.

The City has seen a steady increase in refugees seeking temporary accommodations since September 2021, primarily driven by the border reopening and easing of international travel restrictions. In the first half of 2022, an average of 55 new refugees per week have been accessing Toronto's shelter system and there are currently 1,700 refugee clients in shelters. Toronto continues to provide a safe haven for refugees and refugee claimants looking to build new lives for themselves and their families. Reasons for why people seek refugee status in Canada vary. Individuals may have fled their home countries, or were forced to flee, due to armed conflicts, political unrest, or persecution due to race, religion or political opinion.

The proposed program at 3 Park Home will provide safe shelter, as well as wrap-around supports aimed at helping refugees and refugee claimants find and secure permanent housing and build connection in the community. The supports provided will be based on individual needs, and may include help with the settlement process and case coordination with legal services, employment and education support, and referrals to healthcare and other community services. Recreation programs will be developed at the site to engage clients and youth.

This document summarizes responses to questions asked by members of the public prior to and during the community information session. Questions ahead of the meeting were received by the Community Engagement Facilitator via email and phone. Please note this summary is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript.

1.1 Notification & Communications

This session was advertised by the City of Toronto through flyers (digital and print). Approximately 5000 flyers were dropped at doorsteps in the immediate vicinity of 3 Park Home Ave. Additional notices were sent by email, shared with local buildings, promoted on the project website and through the local Councillor's office.

1.2 Meeting Attendance & Accessibility

173 people joined online and/or called in by phone over the course of the information session. The meeting was streamed on Zoom with technical services provided by King Events. Jane Farrow of the Dept of Words & Deeds facilitated the information session.

The session was recorded and is available online with closed captioning for the public to access on the [City of Toronto's YouTube channel](#).

2.0 Panelist Presentation

2.1 Presenter Names & Titles

- Jane Farrow, *Community Engagement Facilitator, Department of Words & Deeds*
- Councillor John Filion, *City Councillor - Willowdale (Ward 18)*
- Sharon Campbell, *Director Homelessness Initiatives & Prevention Services, SSHA*
- Loretta Ramadhin, *Project Director, Capital Development Unit, SSHA*
- Alison Folosea, *Director, Transactions Services, Corporate Real Estate Management*

2.2 Presentation Outline

- Land Acknowledgement, *Kiefer Shields, Programs Coordinator, Capital Development Unit, SSHA*
- Zoom details, presenter introductions, session purpose & agenda, *Jane Farrow*
- African Ancestral Acknowledgement, *Zoona Khalid, Programs Coordinator, Planning & Engagement*
- Opening remarks, *Councillor John Filion*
- Zoom accessibility and online meeting code of conduct, *Jane Farrow*
- Overview of refugee services, the need for refugee accommodations, current SSHA refugee programs and proposed plan for 3 Park Home, *Sharon Campbell*
- Shelter siting process, shelter site selection criteria and 3 Park Home site details, *Loretta Ramadhin*
- Proposed lease agreement details, *Alison Folosea*
- Overview of the proposed program at 3 Park Home, support services provided and collaboration with community agencies and facilities, *Sharon Campbell*
- Community engagement process and how to get in contact, *Jane Farrow*

3.0 Questions and Answers

The Q&A box on the Zoom webinar received 198 comments/questions with some participants making more than one comment. 38 questions were received in advance via the project Gmail account. This distillation of comments, questions and concerns combine the emailed questions and what was asked during the information session, on live audio and through the Q&A chat box.

The key areas of feedback, concern and inquiry were:

3.1 Terms of the Lease Agreement

Many questions arose about the terms of the lease, how decisions are made around procurement, how the lease can be renewed/not renewed, how the City can be protected from hidden costs or overruns and how the costs are calculated. Staff highlighted that the City's Corporate Real Estate Management team is focused on ensuring the City is paying a fair market value for the agreement.

3.2 Economic, Business and Infrastructure Implications

Many individuals and business owners expressed concern and frustration about the loss of the hotel as a source of rooms and event space for locals. They want the City to help them figure out what can be done about this, if anything, including the BIA.

Many people worried about the capacity of local infrastructure and services, questioning whether the neighbourhood could absorb more school children or users of community amenities like parks, community centres, libraries and so on. Sharon Campbell and Councillor Filion responded by sharing that the school boards have been contacted and engaged with to determine the best approach/plan - talks are ongoing.

A few wondered about employment opportunities with one employee of the 3 Park Home Ave writing to say that they didn't know how this would impact their job at the hotel. They were anxious to hear from management what the plans were for themselves and fellow staff. City staff clarified that staff working at 3 Park Home Ave can contact 3 Park Home management for more information about this process.

3.3 Neighbourhood Safety & Security

Many people expressed worries that the neighbourhood would suffer in terms of safety and security, as well as a decline in real estate values and the reputation of the neighbourhood. Some individuals are seeking assurance from the City that there is a safety plan in place. City staff responded with assurances that safety is a priority and systems are in place to protect people and residents. Participants were directed to the project website where further details will be posted as the shelter operator comes on board.

3.4 Future Use & Plans for the Site

People were very keen to be assured that the refugee shelter would not be converted into a homeless shelter, and used 5800 Yonge Street as a reference point. City staff explained there are no plans for this project to transition into a homeless shelter, and that 5800 Yonge Street converted in response to extraordinary circumstances related to COVID-19 and the immediate needs to physically distance in the shelter system.

3.5 Community Support

A few people expressed support for the refugee shelter and offered to help on such things as social programming and language skills when people begin to arrive.

4.0 Next Steps

Following the public meeting, the presentation and recording of the event were posted to the project website at www.toronto.ca/3ParkHome.

A second information session was held on **Wednesday, July 27, 2022 from 6:30 to 8:30pm**.

A Community Liaison Committee (CLC) may be established with membership and input from the existing organizations in the area. The CLC could include representatives of residents, businesses, and community organizations who are interested in identifying and problem-solving concerns and challenges related to the project. The CLC would work in collaboration with shelter operators and City staff to promote the success of the project in the community. Please contact Jane Farrow, Community Engagement Facilitator, at 3parkhomeave@gmail.com if you are interested in finding out more about establishing a CLC for the upcoming refugee housing project at 3 Park Home Ave.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback about the proposal for temporary refugee housing at 3 Park Home Ave., contact the community engagement team by email at 3parkhomeave@gmail.com.