

**TO OUR VOLUNTEERS AND THOSE WHO HAVE SUPPORTED US:
AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS – August 2016**

This has been prepared to give a somewhat comprehensive summary of the present status of development of The Guesthouse and short-term extra steps. It focuses on the progress and needs of the capital or facility side, but includes highlights in other areas so the relationships can be seen and appreciated. Please review it and feel free to get in touch with Robert Sykes, our Chief Executive Officer, with any questions or comments.

A Little History:

Originally started in North Simcoe as Midland Out of the Cold in 2002, we operated from December through March each year. For a number of seasons we moved daily from church to church, with a brief period of consistent space provided by Community Living Huronia. In 2007, a consistent home in the basement of Knox Presbyterian Church was provided with a plan to stay there for five years and we are very grateful that this space has been loaned to us for over eight years. However, it is not adequate to provide the 'hand up' to the less fortunate of our community for the long term. Often fondly referred to as "The Shack" by our volunteers and guests, it is a small space with not only a lack of space but of privacy, and natural light. The present Shelter is at the bottom of a narrow, winding staircase and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to access safely by individuals with physical limitations.



In 2010, we incorporated as a not-for profit organization with a volunteer Board of Directors and subsequently became a registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency. Our Board members are:

- Bob Bruer, President
- Marion Deeton
- Cyndy Coté
- Leslie Lynn
- Louise Maurice
- Richard Moran
- Dan William

In November 2012, we opened year round and a little later changed our name to "The Guesthouse Shelter". We have become a 'community hub' providing shelter, meals and supports in acquiring or retaining housing those in North Simcoe experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

Our New Building:

In 2014, after a lengthy search and acquisition process, The Guesthouse Shelter succeeded in purchasing a three storey building at 522 Elizabeth Street, Midland. It is located strategically for the guests to access needed services. The Guesthouse Shelter made this decision with the plan for it to become financially sustainable with the leasing of space on two floors, leaving the third floor for our guests.

When complete the new shelter will feature a large dining room that can accommodate 40+ guests for meals, a commercial kitchen, a health clinic



522 Elizabeth Street, Midland, ON, L4R 2A1

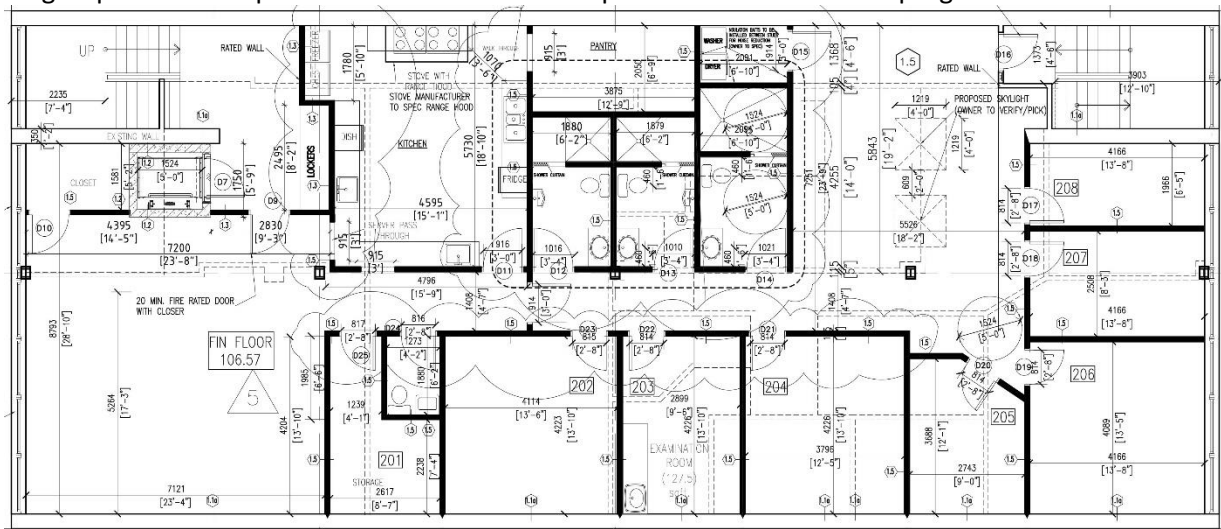
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(in partnership with Chigamik Community Health Centre), and plenty of space for overnight lodgers. It will have housing and support services at the quality our guests deserve. As a 'community hub' for anyone who is experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless, we have been persistently pursuing the funding required to complete the renovations and to provide the services and programs.



Our Services:

We work towards our Mission at The Guesthouse Shelter by:

- Providing emergency shelter to those who are experiencing homelessness;
- In some instances, providing overnight accommodation to those who may have a permanent home but need the social contact of others for brief periods;
- Providing nutritious, appetizing meals to our overnight guests, those who would otherwise have to decide between paying for food, rent or other necessities;
- Supporting individuals and families to acquire and retain an affordable, safe, sustainable home of their choosing.

The Guesthouse works with our guests and a network of organizations and groups (to minimize gaps and duplication) to develop the best plans and opportunities for success with and for the youth, adults and families looking for much needed assistance. Research demonstrates that when people have a home, they are much more successful in dealing with day-to-day living and any special needs they may have. Further it has been shown that with a stable home, the need for more costly services such as:

1. Use of ambulances,
2. Visits to hospital emergency rooms,
3. Admissions to mental health facilities,
4. Interventions by police or the courts, and
5. Incarceration in correctional facilities

are dramatically reduced. Locally, this is borne out in measurable decreases in demand for many of these interventions since the shelter came into existence. Police services have specifically mentioned that local communities and our guests are safer because of the shelter.

Accomplishments since 2012:

1. Attracting, orienting and training a volunteer base of 200 + at any one time who provide year round support and service at the shelter
2. Welcoming 801 unique guests, accommodating 398 overnight lodgers and serving in excess of 53,000 meals
3. Receiving an initial commitment for annualized funding through the County of Simcoe with more anticipated when the shelter and community hub are fully implemented
4. Supported guests who were experiencing episodic or chronic homelessness to acquire a permanent, sustainable home with coordinated supports
5. Purchase of 522 Elizabeth Street, Midland in December 2014 after lengthy dialogue with the community and successful resolution of an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board

6. Refurbishment of space to be leased
7. Leasing of approximately 50% of available Office Space and relocation of third floor tenant
8. Establishment of offices for "The Guesthouse" so we could better implement supports to our guests while the upper floor awaits completion of renovations (furnished and equipped almost entirely by in-kind gifts)
9. Demolition on the third Floor January 2016
10. Installation of the new wall partitions February 2016
11. Hiring of staff to support the volunteers and guests and to assist in our further development
12. Youth Haven, the agency operating the only emergency shelter for youth in Simcoe County, has placed 2 full time staff in offices at 522 Elizabeth Street to provide services to homeless youth in our area. This partnership between our two agencies is the first ever in Simcoe County, wherein the two organizations are working as a team. These two staff will be regular visitors to the shelter and will work with others in engaging homeless youth.



Items 6 and 7 involved a very significant contribution from our guests and volunteers and generous discounts from suppliers of materials. Items 8 and 9 were almost completely funded through generous donations from Home Depot, fundraising and local community support and volunteer labour (including from guests).



Next Steps:

Our business plan, updated in January 2015, anticipated a total cost of approximately \$1.4 million for total cost for the acquisition and required renovations of the new site. Before we finalize contracts with any provider, we require bids in response to detailed specifications from three potential sources. Wherever possible, we access local sources and firms.

The most immediate challenge now is to complete the renovations and we have chosen to divide this into two phases, most of it dependent on having funds available. The phases are:

Phase 1: Start receiving guests on the third level at the new location by completing the necessary construction, before the onset of winter. In order to get an Occupancy Permit, we need to complete the renovations to the third level in compliance with the design and drawings approved by the Town of Midland. To complete this phase, we need between \$150,000 and \$200,000. The range of funding reflects that we do not yet know the value of any donated goods and services we might be provided.

At this point, we remain substantially on budget. The one exception is that we did not foresee the need to replace the heating system on the second and third levels. However, we found after we occupied the building that those systems were very expensive to operate and they were boosted by electric units. Our plan is now to replace all of the heating units which will result in substantial savings in ongoing maintenance and operations. The work can be completed within six or eight weeks.

We continue to pursue grants from both government sources and philanthropic foundations and community groups but have received no approvals to date. The condition of the space and higher numbers of persons requiring emergency accommodation makes the need for completion of this phase very urgent.

Phase 2: Install the much-needed lift to insure accessibility to persons experiencing physical challenges in time to comply with the terms of the Ontario Accessibility Act, still pending for a number of years.

The building currently has a chair lift between the lower and second level but it is inadequate for the needs of many guests, not only now, but in the future. With a price tag of up to \$175,000 and the delay in the requirement to comply to new regulations, we anticipate that it will take us considerable time to raise the funds. Even more significantly, we know that many with legitimate need for accommodation and meals cannot access either our shelter at Knox Presbyterian Church or our new site without this feature. In extreme cases, volunteers and guests have carried individuals and their wheelchairs or other assistive devices down the stairs. Once there, the limited space and nature of the facility remains a real hardship to those in need.

While we may have reason to expect access to a portion of the funds through grants from various levels of government and charitable foundations for that purpose; the requirement for compliance to the Ontario Accessibility Act approaches. Virtually all major funders, both large foundations and government alike, require the applicant organization to demonstrate that it has secured significant financial support from the more local community. Therefore, any funds we receive for that purpose are very important to the overall effort.

Summary:



The foregoing provides an overview. The Guesthouse is very dependent on the communities of North Simcoe for ongoing support, from volunteers in a wide range of roles and for financial and in-kind contributions. Everyone is proud and very appreciative of that support. It is a pillar of strength and a direct, meaningful demonstration of caring and respect for our guests – many of the neediest individuals and families in our area.

Very significant gains have been made, with more on the horizon. We will have had resounding success when our new shelter is completed and open. Ongoing energy is being applied to ensure effective and responsible support to the guests and to the community, through our services and programs, in partnership with agencies, organizations, businesses and individuals in our community. We do, however, need an extra surge of support so our guests can be appropriately accommodated before the onset of winter. The required renovations can be completed with six to eight weeks, but are at a standstill due to lack of funds. Efforts continue to be made in the application for grants and other fundraising efforts, both for the building and for the ongoing operation.

Please consider making a contribution to The Guesthouse. We are a registered charity so an appropriate official receipt will be issued and a significant tax credit can be accessed when a donation is received. Donations can be made:

- through our website: www.theguesthouseshelter.ca;
- in person at our offices on the second level of 522 Elizabeth Street; OR
- by mail addressed to: The Guesthouse Shelter
522 Elizabeth Street
Midland, ON L4R 2A1

If you have questions, you can get them answered by visiting our website or contacting Robert Sykes by email at: robert@theguesthouseshelter.ca or calling the offices at 705-528-1096, ext. 200 to discuss them or arrange an appointment to meet. If you would like a tour of the new site and/or the shelter at Knox Presbyterian Church, just get in touch to arrange a convenient time.

Thank you for supporting The Guesthouse!

Please feel free to share this update with to anyone you think might be interested.

