

## Hennepin County / Salvation Army response to questions posed for Whittier Alliance Board meeting 10-28

### Location / site

- Why locate it in an area already over-saturated with shelters, supportive housing and an overabundance of low income housing?
- Why is this the only possible use of a historic building located in a neighborhood already providing numerous shelters for emotionally challenged, chemically-dependent and felons being returned to productive roles in society?
- Why are services concentrated in one neighborhood, instead of spread equitable throughout the City and Metro?
- Why so many shelters in this area?
- Why does Whittier need yet another shelter? Can't another neighborhood take one?
- Are the planners aware of the extraordinary concentration of supportive housing in the neighborhood? Just let me go down an incomplete list: 2104 NUWAY House women's supportive housing; 2200 1st Ave S NUWAY 1/2 way men's house; 2206 1st ave S NUWAY men's housing; 2218 1st Ave S AA chapter house; "2309 Nicollet LLC" Simpson housing office; Simpson homeless shelter at 2740 1st Ave S with HUGE project on the way; 17 24th St E "Passage Community" housing (Simpson?) family shelter; 2401 and 2405 1st ave S and 109 24th St E "Ebullient Investments" supportive housing for mentally challenged; 2516 1st Ave S NUWAY 1/2way house; and 2533 Minneapolis public housing "Signe Burkhardt" senior housing. To my knowledge there is nowhere else in the city that has this extreme concentration. Am I incorrect about that? Are there a bunch of secret halfway houses all over East Isles?
- Is there no place in Minneapolis to run another shelter than a block from another shelter?
- Why is it going to be located in Whittier?
- What other neighborhoods have you looked at?
- Why are you relocating from the current temporary location? Where is it?
- Why is Hennepin County moving from its present location?
- How would this location and this shelter encourage the clients to identify with a specific community?
- If you could place a facility like this anywhere in the city, anywhere in the county, where would you put it, and why?
- Other than availability of this building, why this location?
- Do you have plans to acquire more homes on the block?

1. As of 10/12 there were **1,080** people staying in homeless shelters in Hennepin County, of whom 77 – or **7%** of the total number of people in homeless shelters on that day – were staying at Simpson Housing Services' single adult shelter. All other existing homeless shelters – and therefore the remaining 1,003 people in shelter – were located in neighborhoods other than Whittier.
2. The City of Minneapolis requires that new homeless shelters be located at least 350 feet away from existing homeless shelters. The existing Simpson shelter site is estimated to be half a mile away, or approximately 2,640 feet.

3. In response to the pandemic, several new shelters have opened over the last year. These included several temporary pandemic shelters (none of which were located in Whittier) as well as:
  - a. A new permanent **100 bed** shelter in the North Loop serving people exiting encampments with a focus on chemical and mental health
  - b. A new permanent **50 bed shelter** in the Cedar-Franklin corridor focused on serving the culturally specific needs of the Native American community
  - c. A temporary **40 bed shelter** focused on pandemic/medical needs near the University of Minnesota that will transition to a permanent location in Elliot Park in 2022 as part of a new 200-unit supportive complex
  - d. A temporary **30 bed shelter** for people who identify as female in South Minneapolis that we hope to transition to a permanent location in the Whittier Neighborhood in 2022 as a stand-alone program
4. This program is moving from its current location in South Minneapolis, Northrop neighborhood, solely because the owner of the current property has sold the land for redevelopment. In 10 months of operating at this location neither Hennepin County nor the Salvation Army has received a single complaint from neighborhood residents about the program
5. There are no plans to acquire additional buildings on this block
6. Several sites across the City were considered in the search for a permanent site. This site and location was prioritized based on the following factors:
  - a. Readiness: The building is 'turn-key.' Having been rehabilitated as a youth hostel recently it is already near-perfectly fitted out for offering a safe, dignified space for people to stay. Other sites identified required significant rehabilitation or complete redevelopment, which would both be costly and push out the availability, potentially for years
  - b. Connectivity: The Whittier neighborhood offers great transport links, amenities, parks, galleries, proximity to downtown, and overall access to opportunities
  - c. Historic building: This building will convey that we value those we serve and believe they deserve a safe, dignified, welcoming and beautiful setting in which to receive services and resolve their housing crisis.

## Planning

- Why is this emergency shelter an emergency?
- What happened to the Heading Home Hennepin plan? That was an actual plan to tackle homelessness, rather than these grossly inadequate piecemeal ideas.
- Why now? Why convert a youth hostel?
- Will this shelter serve the immediate neighborhood or is it a service for the City and County as a whole?
- The Hennepin County flyer announced the shelter will serve up to 30 people but their application to CPED states up to 50. What's the reason for this dishonesty?
- Why Salvation Army? Harbor Lights is a shelter that most folks experiencing homelessness avoid at all costs. Clearly this is a different project scope, but we have Simpson Housing Services here in the neighborhood who serve all genders (and St Stephen's whose shelter serves single adult men) and they know the neighborhood and have built relationships with our community. Seems advantageous to give a contract to folks who already operate here and have done that work for over 30 years.

1. Hennepin County invests in all aspects of the housing continuum in order to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.
2. in 2019 we established a new vision for the single adult shelter system focused on lowering barriers, improving outcomes and increasing capacity for underserved populations. The context for this was the alarming growth in unsheltered homelessness and encampments across the metro, as well as the ongoing strain and demand upon existing shelter programs. Specific recommendations were created in partnership with shelter providers and, especially, the advocacy group Street Voices of Change which is comprised of people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness and who have developed a Shelter Bill of Rights. They included:
  - a. Reforms to existing shelters that have since been implemented, accelerated by the COVID crisis and the resources made available through it, including dramatically increasing the number of housing focused case managers, reducing the numbers of guests, moving to 24/7 opening and adding storage, new restrooms, airflow systems and other physical improvements
  - b. Establishing three additional shelter programs to better meet the needs of people who have otherwise gone unsheltered. The first was a culturally specific shelter focused on the needs of the Native American community. As above, this 50-bed shelter was launched by the American Indian Community Development Corporation last winter. The second was a medical respite shelter. As above, this 40-bed shelter will be part of the new Catholic Charities Exodus 2.0 development in 2022 and is currently operating at a temporary location near the University of Minnesota

- c. The third recommended shelter was a small-scale, 30-bed stand-alone emergency shelter for female identified individuals. This recommendation reflected excess demand for female shelter spaces that had led to some being turned away and the absence of any existing female-only shelter program in our community. People who identify as female are at elevated risk when experiencing unsheltered homelessness from violence, abuse and exploitation.
3. The Adult Shelter Connect, operated by Simpson Housing Services under contract with Hennepin County, will be responsible for making all referrals to ensure that female identified individuals who would most benefit from this shelter program are those served in this space. The only way to access the program is through that thoughtful and intentional intake and referral process that happens offsite, is available to anyone experiencing homelessness in our community and makes placements to all existing shelters.
4. The shelter was developed and designed as a 30-bed program and has been funded and operating as such. The contract between Hennepin County and Salvation Army stipulates this is a 30-bed shelter. The application referred to in the question has been amended and is now consistent in stating 30 beds. By comparison, the existing hostel at this site is currently zoned for **58 people\***
5. Salvation Army were selected to operate this new shelter and provide onsite services through a competitive process that included people with lived experience of homelessness and other experts. The review panel specifically included members of Street Voices of Change who had stayed at and experienced Harbor Light Center
6. As per Trish Thacker, Executive Director of Harbor Light Center: *“We understand and acknowledge the Harbor Light Center’s challenging history. We have de-densified the Harbor light Center in order to provide a more dignified shelter experience. We also completed a \$1M+ renovation this year to Safebay (our largest congregate sleeping space). We’ve shifted how we train and support staff so that they are able to provide services in a more trauma-informed manner. Our past says where we’ve been. It does not indicate where we are going. We are committed to continued growth in the quality of services provided while also continuing to improve our facility.”*

## Safety / security

- What kinds of security will be there?
- Will there be 24/7 security employees onsite? Not just cameras/alarms but actual humans there to make sure the residents are safe, being courteous to neighbors, and that friends/acquaintances of residents are also being safe/courteous with neighbors in the surrounding block?
- How safe is it for women?
- How will the women be protected from opportunistic crime?
- What infrastructure protection from rapists are you proposing?
- There is the nearby group home on 24th Street and 1st Ave - will this be a problem at all in terms of co-location? How is the city + Salvation Army thinking about activity that goes on at the park across the street and how it might intersect with the shelter? What responsibility does the city + SA feel for increased outdoor activity that might occur in the neighborhood?
- I see many unhoused people (generally men, and frequently using alcohol and other substances) in Washburn park basically every day, which is directly across the street from this property. I wonder how that ever-present population will interface, if at all, with the women sheltering in this building? Has the county/Salvation Army considered that?
- What about all of the crime going on in the park and neighborhood - like drugs and theft - how safe is it for these women from the many predators housed in this neighborhood already?
- Will you be putting up fencing?
- What will lighting be like on the block?
- Who will monitor residents if they leave the premises?
- Can the city and county help ensure that this is a dignified space for the residents and their neighbors INCLUDING and ESPECIALLY evening/weekend noise and loitering?

1. Salvation Army will provide 24/7 security services to the shelter. This consists of in-person security in addition to cameras and alarms. The two shifts that run from 7am until 11pm will each have two security staff on site, one at the desk and the other conducting rounds. The overnight shift has one security staff on site located at the desk and conducting hourly rounds. Back up is available if needed from the Harbor Light Center
2. All security staff are trained through the CPI institute for de-escalation and crisis intervention
3. The program has a 10pm curfew. This can be adjusted for individuals working shifts that require a later return
4. The experience of the program in the last ten months has been that the guests remained inside the vast majority of the time and valued being able to do so. Any that did use local parks or other local spaces did so appropriately and were mindful of personal safety. The experience has been that guests develop supportive relationships and look out for each other, which is one of the benefits of this smaller shelter model
5. There has not been a safety incident in the 10 months the program has been operating
6. No fencing will be erected and no changes will be made to lighting on the block for this program

7. Guests can leave the premises. They must return by the curfew unless prior arrangements have been made to accommodate their work shifts
8. As all referrals to the program are made through the Adult Shelter Connect, there are no walk-up admissions for this program
7. It should, of course, be noted that people accessing this program are doing so to prevent them going unsheltered, which would pose immense personal safety risks. Since opening, people who identify as female who have previously declined other shelter options because they are co-located with men or because they felt unsafe in those spaces have reported feeling safe along with a sense of community in this new program. 134 people have stayed so far.

## Programming / operations

- Do guests have to re-reserve their beds every night? (ie, is it a longer-term or short term shelter?)
- What are shelter rules about intoxication? Will women who are not sober be turned away for the night?
- Will drugs or alcohol use be allowed?
- During the day where do these women go?
- How will 150 meals a day be provided?
- What kind of food will be prepared in the meals? Are the folks in charge of food working to source food from local growers as much as they can?
- Is it just a shelter or will there be actual qualified programming that helps with all areas of a person's life who could end up homeless?
- Women-only shelters help to increase the feeling of safety and support. Are there additional support programs that go hand in hand with this?
- How will the shelter programs work to engage neighbors in supporting shelter guests? How will the shelter work to ensure that shelter guests MAINTAIN housing stability, not just that they get it initially?
- What are the project's hopes for the role that neighbors can play?
- How can the neighborhood connect with the shelter to both direct people in need to these resources and to create community with the neighbors who come in seeking shelter?
- Will any of the women have children and if so how are they considered?
- Is this women only, no children? If children are allowed - what ages? And all genders?

1. Guests have an initial 30 day stay and can continue to reserve their bed until no longer needed. There have been guests in the program who have stayed more than six months as they stabilize
2. Intoxication is not a barrier to access. Using drugs or alcohol inside the shelter is cause for separation from programming. Such incidents have been extremely rare in the ten months the program has been operating and, when it has occurred, people have been helped to access alternative shelters
3. This is a 24/7 program. People do not need to leave during the day and the experience thus far is that guests spend the majority of their time within the program

4. Salvation Army operates a commercial kitchen at Harbor Light Center where food will be prepared. They partner with Second Harvest Heartland to receive rescued high-quality food from Lunds and Byerlys which they supplement with purchases as needed from Reinhart Food Service. Meals will be conveyed to the new location – as has been the case for the last ten months – in one SUV or van. 30 meals are delivered this way three times per day.
5. All guests will have access to case management assistance on-site to connect them to benefits, housing and other supports
6. Neighbors can support this program by providing a welcoming environment. Small gestures – eye contact, waving, smiling – can mean a lot to people who have felt invisible in the past. The goal of the program is to create a sense of community both inside and out
7. This program is for single adults who identify as female, are aged 18+ and without dependents. No children are allowed in this program. In cases where guests may have children who are not currently in their care, this program may help them stabilize and move to a housing situation as a critical step for reunification.

## Parking

- Where will the staff park?
- Will there be visitors and where will they park?
- Where will the trucks that service this facility park? Where will the trucks park to sustain the supplies of 3 meals a day for 30-50 clients per day?
- I'm wondering about your plans for parking. I noted that there are only three parking spots behind the mansion and one handicapped parking spot. Will those be for staff only?
- Given that there are at least 10 staff members per day as explained in your application for the conditional use permit, will the other staff park on the street?
- Will some of the homeless people being housed at 2400 Stevens have cars? In my discussion with staff at Simpson Housing I understand that a certain percentage of the the homeless occupants have cars and live in their cars. If a third of the homeless occupants have cars then that is another 10 cars on the street and another four to five for staff. So who wins in this scenario? Are landlords with 1 to 4 units expected to compete and perhaps lose space to the new shelter? And how is that stabilizing for this neighborhood?

1. Staff will use on-site parking or street parking if necessary. Staff are spread over the 24/7 operations and a number of daytime staff currently use public transportation
2. It has been six months since there was a guest with a car. Experience so far suggests that guests with vehicles, while possible, is extremely rare in practice
3. Visitors are limited to one communal area of the building and not common
4. The current hostel is zoned to allow **58 guests\***.

## COVID

- Will residents be required to be vaccinated against COVID?
- Will they be tested regularly to help deter the spread of COVID?

1. Guests are not required to be vaccinated, though it is strongly encouraged. Guests have streamlined access to vaccination through Healthcare for the Homeless
2. Guests are tested if they show symptoms or are known to have been exposed. Any guests testing positive have access to off-site isolation shelters. These and other measures have enabled Hennepin County shelters to avoid the COVID outbreaks seen in other communities around the country.

## Queer / Trans Issues

- Will trans women and nonbinary individuals be included in the shelter?
- Why is The Salvation Army, which has historically had a reputation for discriminatory practices aimed at the GBLT community, being conferred with the project's administration?
- Salvation Army has a poor history with the queer and trans community. Will this be a welcoming space for all women? Will staff be trained to appropriately serve the needs of trans women? Is there any partnership with St Stephen's since this would be right around the corner from them?
- How does this project handle gender expansive people? (Including trans women, genderqueer, and non-binary folks)
- Will the shelter have informed services for trans women? I would strongly support that.
- How do you define "female-identifying"? By what criteria will staff determine who is and who isn't a woman?
- How will the shelter's policy of admitting "female-identifying" men be communicated to shelter residents, some of whom may be seeking refuge from domestic abuse and sexual violence? Will women have to share bedrooms, bathrooms, showers and other intimate spaces with "female-identifying" men? Is this a women's shelter or not?

1. Eligibility is based entirely on how the individual identifies. Anyone identifying as female would be eligible for this program
2. The individual bedrooms and bathrooms provided at this site provide flexibility to meet differing needs of guests in instances such as the example provided. All guests are advised that everyone here is to be treated with dignity and respect and in accordance with how they identify
3. As per Trish Thacker, Executive Director Harbor Light Center: *"We are asked about this with regularity and welcome the opportunity to speak to the issue. It is included in our mission statement that we meet people at their greatest point of need to provide hope and services without discrimination. At 1010 Currie and at the women's shelter, clients are assigned to programs according to their stated identity. If any issues arise within a congregate room, we work*



*with shelter guests to ensure that they are treating everyone in the room with dignity and respect, and our staff are also trained in cultural sensitivity and diversity competence.”*

## **Process**

- Several houses on our block were built in the 1880's and are contributing structures in the Washburn Fair Oaks historic district. These homes have survived much over the years and are difficult to maintain due to the orange. I'd like to hear why our Whittier Neighborhood Association thinks this emergency shelter will improve our neighborhood?
- What notifications have we been given or do we have options to oppose this housing?

1. Prior to the Minneapolis City Planning Commission meeting on Monday, November 15, we will reach out to residents of the surrounding blocks via door knocking to talk with them.

## **Corrections**

\* Two references to the zoning have been amended to reflect that the current zoning allows for 58 guests rather than 67, which was the previous understanding of County staff.