

NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION MEETING

PROJECT: 317 / 321 S Sherwood St Group Home

DATE: February 10, 2016

APPLICANT: Annette Zacharias, Faith Family Hospitality

PROJECT PLANNER: Ryan Mounce

City Presentation: Site History & Development Review Process

- City of Fort Collins has owned the buildings on Sherwood Street since the early 1980s.
- Central connector constructed to create 1 building out of two homes. Several additional expansions created a building with 19 bedrooms, multiple kitchen/bathrooms, and common open spaces.
- Buildings were occupied as a group home for over 25 years by Crossroads Safehouse
- Buildings have been vacant for the past 4 years. The former group home use was abandoned and the site must go through the full development review process to reestablish the use again.
- Site is located in the Neighborhood Conservation, Medium Density (NCM) zone district.
- Proposal under discussion tonight is for a group home to house families for transitional housing. Group homes and large group care facilities are subject to Type 1 (Administrative) review in the NCM zone district.
- The decision-maker for Type 1 reviews is an Administrative Hearing Officer at a public hearing
- In addition to land use approval, the project also needs approval by City Council for lease of the properties – this would occur only after the development review process is completed.
- The proposal will likely need to submit three modification of standard requests to the following Land Use Code sections:
 - Floor Area (building size) – Existing building exceeds current zone district maximum
 - Group Home Separation (distance between group homes) – A group home operated by Summitstone is located less than the required 1,000 feet away near Whitcomb & Oak.
 - Group Home Size (# of residents) – Maximum in the NCM district is 15 residents; proposal is up to a 30 residents

Applicant Presentation:

- Proposal is to house up to 8 families transitioning out of homelessness at the Sherwood Properties. Many definitions of a family, but the adult(s) must be related to the children by marriage or blood.
- Faith Family Hospitality is an interfaith collaboration working with 30 local churches that currently provides housing for families transitioning out of homelessness.
 - Currently housing 4 families in the program. The families stay at and rotate between churches every week. Other churches help out by providing support services. Currently, families must move every week on Sunday and take all their belongings with them and make new transportation arrangements every week.

- A day center is also provided at the Fort Collins Mennonite Fellowship for families not in the overnight program. The families can use showers, laundry, and kitchen during the day. Everyone who utilizes the day center is background checked.
- The Sherwood property would allow the families better case management, privacy, independence and other qualities to increase chances of success and finding permanent housing.
- Families would stay at the Sherwood location approximately 6 months in a co-housing or co-living environment. Each family will get several bedrooms, based on size. Would like to make 'suite' environment for each family at the property.
- No child-care provided on-site, all children must be supervised by parents utilizing a line of sight rule.
- Some day-center activities may come to the Sherwood site as part of the proposal.
- Case management includes financial literacy and debt programs, finding employment, child-care, and enrolling in housing lists.
- A resident manager will be living on-site to handle issues and provide mentor and support to families.

Comments, Questions & Responses:

Q - Question R - Response C - Comment

Q (Citizen): I have a couple clarifying questions – you said a family is determined as two parents and children?

R (Applicant): Parent or parents and children, some families only have one parent.

Q (Citizen): Can you also tell me a little more about your background check process?

R (Applicant): Every adult in the program and our volunteers go through a criminal background check, and it was just expanded to a full national check, rather than only a state background check. Some of the families are referred to us from outside the community and it was important to do the full national check. Families are also drug-screened, and they are not allowed to use drugs in the program or to be intoxicated. The residents of the program have to pay for their own drug-testing.

Q (Citizen): So they're not allowed to have criminal records?

R (Applicant): It depends on the criminal record and how long it's been. If someone shoplifted 5-years ago and has not since, that is different from someone who shows up as a convicted sex offender.

Q (Citizen): Where do you draw the line where you may be faced with someone who has a recent drug charge, but also needs help housing their six children?

R (Applicant): There's only one person who does the intake and screening procedures to ensure consistency in the process. What we look for is if there are crimes related to guns, bodily injury, or sex convictions. A drug-use conviction may not necessarily disqualify eligibility, but it may warrant additional testing, and if something shows up in the labs, we would have to see levels dropping as they enter and stay in the program to remain in place. Residents cannot be under the influence of marijuana unless they have a prescription.

Almost 60% of the families in the program either leave voluntarily or are asked to leave because they can't do the work. 43% of those in the program from the last 12-months were able to achieve permanent housing.

R (Applicant): Because the families are utilizing other services, emergency shelter, or are referred by partner agencies, they also have a track record. Families must show they are a good fit for the transitional housing program. Some families may need to stay in the emergency shelter program until

they are a good fit or leave. We've had families stay anywhere from only 11 days to over a year in the emergency shelter program.

Q (Citizen): You talk a lot about your programmatic elements of the program, but you haven't talked about the fit for the facility or with the neighborhood. Having read your application for conceptual review, it seems to suggest you were not familiar with the layout of the facility and were only needing a little bit of updating. I'm curious what other due diligence you've done since the conceptual review? I know Crossroads had a lot of difficulty with the cost of heating and cooling the facility and ongoing maintenance -- have you budgeted for all this, and explored building code compliance issues, and necessary investments in the property? Are you working with professionals on the project?

R (Applicant): We have a team of people we're working with. In January, we were just looking to see if we could even get through the initial conceptual review and it was high-level. It's now time to do the heavy lifting of the due diligence.

Yesterday we just had an inspection done on the property and received the report today. We also have a general contractor and designer working for us. We're putting those pieces together right now. There are some identified issues that we will need to attend to. For instance, there are some floors that we will need to shore-up. We have inspections on heating and cooling and electrical still to be done.

We are also working with Crossroads to get some of their past bills for the property. It's said they were high, but it's also a large building, as it's over 9,000 square feet. I am the former director of Crossroads and was at the Sherwood facility for a short time as they transitioned to the new facility, I knew the utility bills for their new facility were 3 times higher than the Sherwood property, but that makes sense as the new facility is 3 times as large, which tells us the Sherwood property may not be that cost-prohibitive necessarily as utilizing any other building. We're working on the budget modeling right now.

Q (Citizen): Is your budget based on housing 30 residents at the facility at all times, which is double the maximum of 15 residents allowed by the zoning? Would your budget model work if there were only 8 or 15 residents at the location? A request for 30 seems like an extraordinary request in terms of what the Land Use Code section for group homes permits.

R (Applicant): No, 30 is the very highest level. We're exploring accommodating 8 families. Our average is 2.4 people per family, but we also do have some outlier families with many children, which could put us towards the 30 number for short periods of time.

R (City): The City's Land Use Code does have a procedure for what we call a modification of standard for projects that are not meeting the stated requirements. Those modification requests need to be approved by the decision-maker and must follow certain justifications and be supported by evidence and analysis.

In making a modification request to increase the maximum number of residents, the applicant must select a specific number. The City doesn't have the capability to be inspecting every approved development project on a regular basis; instead our zoning department operates on a compliant basis. If there were ever a complaint, the specific number of the modification resident of maximum residents is what the project would be evaluated against rather than a blanket modification to exceed the current 15-resident limit.

Q (Citizen): You mention in-state and out of state -- how many of these families are actually from the community?

R (Applicant): 65% of our families come locally from the Front Range. We have lots of family that come to us because they are brought in to Crossroads from outlying areas and get integrated into the support network and want to stay with us. We get many referrals from Crossroads. If the families are a good fit for our program, then they can be referred to us.

R (Applicant): A lot of people who are looking for work will go to where family is, and often people are promised a job or place to stay by a family member and it doesn't work out, and those individuals are left without options in a new community. That could be another way we receive potential families. Others may wear out their welcome with family or friends and are asked to leave and end up sleeping in their cars or find Catholic Charities who refer them to us.

Q (Citizen): How many of the thirty locations you have located right in the middle of a single family neighborhood? You're talking about putting a high density use right in the middle of a neighborhood. What kind of problems can that create? Is there additional crime, a real estate impact, are there transient issues? You do a lot of studying on your population, but what are you doing to those around you?

Q (Citizen): Are the churches the families housed in bigger than the proposed facility?

R (Applicant): Well they're staying at churches, which overall are larger and on church grounds. We have not had families staying permanently at a facility like this before; they move every week to a new church in another part of the community.

R (Applicant): We have looked at other test sites. At the Greeley Transitional House, they are long established and they have a 12-unit facility in a residential neighborhood and it doesn't appear there is any impact from them.

R (Citizen): Having lived next door to the Crossroads Safehouse, and while they were there, we had more trick-or-treaters, we had less parking, and you were aware if there were issues or problems of people who were walking around or in the alleys, but otherwise it wasn't an issue.

R (Applicant): One of the things the City is requiring of us is that we establish a parking lot in the back with landscaping so the neighbors won't be bothered by headlights and to ensure we have spaces for our parking needs. We work with a lot of families that don't have vehicles, but for those that do, our plan is to have them park in the back parking lot and not on your street, because we are aware you don't have parking on your street.

C (Citizen): The thing is with the parking lot, I think you said you will provide 4 to 7 spaces, there's a wide range there. If there's someone living on site, that is probably 1 space, and if you have up to 8 families, and up to half have cars, that's another 4 or 5 spaces. If you only have 4-7 spaces, they will be on the street, and parking is a huge problem, and I don't see the parking will work. I wish the parking situation was a little more settled and I could feel better about this. There is so much pressure on the neighborhood right now and it increases all the time in terms of parking. I see this as adding to the problem.

R (Applicant): During the daytime, if the residents are at jobs or working with agencies, their cars won't be present. Only 50% of our families have vehicles, or the need for 4 spaces, in addition to spaces needed for the resident manager.

R (Citizen): But you may be bringing others in during the day for the day center.

Q (Citizen): You also mentioned you had volunteers? How many employees and volunteers would be there during the day?

R (Applicant): The day center has been included thus far in the proposal, but we're still determining what role the day center is at this site. Many of the families who utilize the day center don't have vehicles, they use public transit. Families using the center likely won't have vehicles, but there would be 2 spaces needed for employees of the day center. Any volunteers are in and out and dropping items off.

R (City): The Land Use Code requirement for group home parking is based off employees present and number of adult residents who can own or operate a vehicle. The ratio is 2 spaces for every 3 employees and 1 space for every 4 adult residents. What we need more information on in determining parking spaces beyond this are the characteristics of the day center, because that could have an impact as well.

R (Citizen): Can they add additional parking?

R (City): Yes, our parking requirements are just a minimum, they can add additional spaces.

Q (Citizen): How does the day center operate? Is it only families that use it or individuals?

R (Applicant): Our program is only families, and they have to be invited and screened before they ever get to the day center.

Q (Citizen): The group home designation is very broad. Did you approach the City for a group home occupancy, or was it suggested that is what you are?

R (City): Based on the current characteristics of the proposal, that is what we're classifying the proposal. It most closely resembles the definition of a group home in the Land Use Code and is consistent in operation with the Crossroads Safehouse when that organization utilized the facility and it was also classified a group home at that point.

Q (Citizen): As a group home, there are certain definitions within, including one that has a certain amount of care provided. It seems here on one hand there is some amount of care provided, and on the other there is a push towards independence. Were other potential classifications looked at, such as a lodging establishment, or was it this is the only thing that fits, so we'll use it?

R (City): Based on the definitions in the Land Use and Municipal Codes, some of those other definitions don't match the proposal. There are distinctions with a lodging establishment as a short term rental for less than 30 days, while for this proposal families may be staying upwards of 6 months.

R (Citizen): Wasn't Crossroads a domestic violence shelter?

R (City): There is a separate land use for domestic violence shelter now in the Land Use Code, however it was created after Crossroads Safehouse had begun operations on Sherwood, and the requirements for a domestic shelter versus group home are nearly identical.

C (Applicant): It is a little strange to call this model a group home, but as we were exploring this one of the things that came up was stormwater and floodplain, which has restrictions on critical populations. In part because of this there won't be unsupervised child care. There won't be people with disabilities that won't be able to evacuate if there is a flood.

R (Citizen): Do you have a determination from stormwater?

R (Applicant): We went through the criteria with them of who would be staying at the site, that there wouldn't be child care or school classes provided to ensure vulnerable populations would not be present.

R (City): At the conceptual review meeting in January stormwater did not believe it was a critical facility based on the information they reviewed.

C (Applicant team): As president of the Faith Family Hospitality Board, it has been very helpful to hear the questions and comments raised tonight. Has there been any discussion with the neighborhood association for more input?

R (City): I do not believe there is a neighborhood association or HOA for this area.

R (Applicant team): It seems to me we need to be sure we're going to be a good neighbor and how that works and what these concerns are that are surfacing tonight. What's our timeframe for tonight?

R (Applicant): We pushed to have the meeting tonight and early because we knew we had to discuss this. We would love to have families move in this summer, but we recognize we have a lot to do. That's

why some of this, like budget numbers, I can't provide yet. I just got the inspection report back this afternoon and now we can start working with our general contractor on what this all means, what concerns are, and extrapolate what our costs are. We wanted to come to you all first because we had heard from some of the previous meetings that you were interested in what was going on at these buildings. We're very interested in hearing what the struggles and successes were or other ideas you have from when Crossroads used to operate at this location.

R (City): From my review of the proposal, I'm also interested in learning about any concerns for the potential modification requests for that many residents and what experience was with Crossroads Safehouse. Crossroads also had more than 15 residents when they were operating, but the two group homes aren't necessarily the same, and it would be great to hear other thoughts on this. Tonight we've already had comments expressed about parking impacts in the neighborhood.

Q (Citizen): Is it fair to say most of your residents are children?

R (Applicant): Yes. If by chance every family had two parents, that's 16, and the remainder (14) would be children, however many families may only have one parent.

Q (Citizen): My question then is where do the kids play?

R (Applicant): In the backyard, there is an existing playground. It's an enclosed playground. That is our anticipation that they have their own playground.

Q (Citizen): What about teenagers?

R (Applicant): There is a computer room, a large center space, and we expect to have youth hangout spaces. In my experience at Crossroads, there is a teenage room where the little kids don't get to go. We expect to be able to do that as well.

R (Applicant): We also have very few teenagers. Most of the families we help have smaller children, less than 10 years old. The teens that we do help house also often have jobs, they are trying to help support their families.

Q (Citizen): Have you checked in with Dunn Elementary to see if there's room. They would be the local school the children would attend.

R (Applicant): Children in our program get to choose their school. What we would have is a bus stop at the front door where Poudre School District could work with us to pick up every day. Many of our children go to Odea Elementary because it is a school that is culturally accommodative to families in these situations. We haven't reached out to Dunn yet but I imagine we would do so.

Q (Citizen): This question is more for the City. I know parking is a big issue and there was talk in the past several years about a garage at the Mulberry Pool parking lot. Is there any news on that?

R (City): There was talk of a public-private partnership at that site, or a separate garage by Blue Ocean who is linked with Otterbox on Meldrum, but there isn't any new information on either location at the present time.

Q (Citizen): You explained the drug policy, but for alcohol you mentioned no intoxication – does that mean no alcohol?

R (Applicant): Yes, no alcohol. Even if someone is taking prescription pain medication, they can't illustrate behavior that they are under the influence. We err on the side of care for the kids.

Q (Citizen): And then where do they go?

R (Applicant): They are asked to leave. They are warned, and are continually told from intake that this is the policy for the program.

Q (Citizen): In your other facilities, how do you address neighborhood concerns after you're up and running?

R (Applicant): There may be some confusion. Right now, the families we house move every week to a new church around the community, so there isn't a permanent location.

Q (Citizen): So this is the first time you will have a facility outside of the churches and also 6-months at a time? This is experimental?

R (Applicant): It is the first time for the families staying in a more permanent location outside of churches, but the model has been utilized elsewhere and we are looking at best practices and visiting other locations. We have had families staying with us for longer than 6-months, but they have to move every week from church to church. Our system is meant to be an emergency shelter, and because we don't have the option of transitional housing in the community, it is a bottleneck in the care and housing continuum.

Q (Citizen): You mention this is evidence-based, so you have been documenting this and its part of a record you have?

R (Applicant): When we say evidence-based that means other people have done benchmarking and identified critical elements to success.

Q (Citizen): The way evidence-based is mostly commonly used is that there is ongoing documentation to the case at hand. The information from the Interfaith Hospitality Network doesn't relate to the case at hand.

R (Applicant): What we're doing is not reinventing from what they have identified. There are models for this all over the country. Some in Colorado include the Greeley Transitional House and Family Homestead in Denver.

Q (Applicant team): As you've researched these other models, what have they said about their impacts on things such as property values?

R (Applicant): They said it hasn't had an impact. I've only asked that question to two of them. They aren't seeing this. This has been a vacant property for almost 5 years and it was a safehouse before, and we're hoping to not have any impact on property values.

Q / C (Citizen): Is that information you're going to provide? This should be a focus on the impact of your neighbors. You all have a great mission, but this is your first shot at this type of facility in the middle of a single family neighborhood. Having information on impacts would be helpful to your proposal. A curious question is how many of you all live in Old Town and will be impacted? Is anyone in the organization living the pain with us?

C (Citizen): I think part of it is also the Old Town Neighborhoods have been through so much recently, we all have big hearts I think, and we want to take care of people, but in these neighborhoods it's been one thing after another for years. I'm on a Whitcomb by connections, the substance and mental health center. One thing that has impacted us recently is their new no smoking on their property, so the residents have to go across the street to smoke. Now when my kids walk to school, they have to walk through the smoke.

R (Applicant): We'll have to look at that since it is a City property.

R (City): It will have to be a smoke free lease since it is from the City.

Q (Citizen): How long will your lease be with the City? I wonder if there is a way to reexamine these issues when it comes again. How long will this be here in the neighborhood? If things aren't working out in a year, what do we do?

R (Applicant): We want to purchase the property. The property is unwieldy and we thought we were a good fit. There's not an opportunity from the City to purchase right now, but we are interested in that. It would be a lease with a purchase option down the road if it works out.

R (City): It's not negotiated at all yet. What we're doing here is we offered it to all those that are interested for a long-term lease and they pay all the expenses. This is the only organization that had interest and could meet criteria such as not housing a vulnerable population in a floodplain. When you ask an organization to go through and make improvements to the building and take care of maintenance, you can't give a short-term lease because it has to work for them as well. There are always terms of default included in the lease, and if they don't do what they're asked to do, they will also be asked to leave.

Q (Citizen): If someone makes improvements to the property, there are amortization schedules, you can have operating covenants, and there are many options. If they're not working out, there's lots of ways to do it.

R (City): We've had meetings on the property before that some of you have come to. When we started looking at what the City could do with the facility, we were even looking at dividing the facility and it cost too much money. They will have to put in substantial improvements, including paving part of the alley. The City won't be paying them back for those improvements. We're trying to help the community and take care of the facility.

R (Citizen): There should be operating covenants, and you have the right to terminate the lease if they're not performing. If they become a problem for the community, the community should have the opportunity as owners of the facility to have them out.

R (City): If they are not performing to the lease and are in default they will be asked to leave.

R (Citizen): Not just financial default, but other aspects as well.

R (City): Yes, default on any terms of the lease. They are required to keep the premises in good and healthy condition

C (Citizen): We're concerned with unforeseen circumstances. With a long term lease, what are our options as a neighborhood if crime goes up or vandalism increases?

R (City): We have nuisance laws in place that are complaint drive, for any neighborhood that can be brought to the City's attention. For instance, if you thought there were 100 people in the house, you could file a complaint and it would be investigated.

R (City): If there are any complaints or zoning violations, the City (Real Estate) receives a copy of the ticket or warning as property owner. All of these issues would be at the forefront of the City's attention. Also, because it is a leased facility, the City does property management inspections to make sure they are taking care of the facility. For property management, we aren't complaint-based, there will always be quarterly inspections. You will have people to call if you are experiencing issues.

C (Citizen): It seems like it's the City's strategy to match a long-term lease to what amounts to an experiment for the organization.

R (City): We're trying to deploy a community asset. They asked for us to sell the building, but we weren't sure if we really wanted that and if that would make sense to them immediately. We can review after a lease term if it makes sense to sell the property. The family promise model the organization is based on does offer these types of services and has experience in other parts of the country and within Colorado.

Q (Citizen): This is a local non-profit that was started out of the need in the community?

R (Applicant): Yes. We're not going into the building inexperienced either. David Everitt is championing our building team. We also have general contractors, designers, and many volunteers lined up to donate time.

Q (Citizen): Do you have a design professional? I assume you will need a building permit or change of occupancy?

R (Applicant): We are now going into full planning mode. We have a couple architects we have in mind that have offered to donate their services or for reduced price.

R (City): That is a requirement of our lease that all alterations have to go through the planning or building departments and they have to have licensed contractor. That is for all of our leases.

Q (Citizen): Is there any option to downsize or to start on a smaller scale as part of the lease? Then do a lease renewal with a larger scale?

R (Applicant): One of the things we're still exploring is not operating it as a day center, especially not right away. We have made improvements at the current day center, and it is centrally located. We may choose to keep that. I am more than willing to say that we aren't likely to vacate our lease at the Mennonite Fellowship. I would love to have 7 or 8 families here, and with 2.4 people per family, our average, we could be at 20 or 24 people. It's going to be costly for us to do this, and it would be nice to offer what we can in the configuration of the current building which has almost 20 bedrooms.

C (Citizen): I think it would also be in your best interests to start on a smaller scale, since it is somewhat new.

R (Applicant): I don't know what that means in terms of having to go through the review process.

R (City): There is a City process in place, either amendments to an approved plan, or a new development plan, where the number of residents could be changed over time. Going above the 15 resident maximum limit would always require a modification request, however.

Q (Citizen): Has the property been appraised?

R (City): It has been appraised in the past, and we have ordered a new appraisal.

Q (Citizen): In your view, what is a long-term lease?

R (City): We haven't gotten there yet. We don't approve the lease until they have their building permit. Council has to approve the lease but they can't hear about that project until after the development review process is completed.

C (Citizen): I have been listening to everyone's feedback and I think we have a great opportunity to do something really nice down here, instead of having those monstrosity-types of houses built or having Otterbox come in. Let's keep the houses the same way they are, just be Old Town houses, and be used for something really beneficial and be the good neighbors and welcome them instead of asking what are you going to do for me? We don't get to pick who buys the house next to us if it's for sale.

Q (Citizen): What happened to the loan money that was provided to the safehouse to move to their new facility?

R (City): It's still there. We may go through the budget process and just request the money to pay the loan off.

Q (Citizen): Knowing about the financial considerations, is that part of the public record?

R (City): The ordinance that made that transfer is in the public record.