

871-873 Topsail Road Halfway House Proposal DA24-0276

Q&As from August 5th Public Briefing Session

The following questions were asked in the public briefing session on August 5, 2024. Staff have provided responses to questions that are within the scope of the City's review (Identified as "MP"- Mount Pearl). The applicant has provided responses to questions outside the City's scope and specific to operations (Identified as "OH"- Open Hands NL).

1. Does this development require re-zoning?

A12: No, this development does not require re-zoning. This proposed development is located in a Commercial-Mixed (CM) use zone. It is under the discretion of Council under this use zone to approve this type of development. If another similar development is proposed in this Use Zone, the Discretionary process will follow (MP).

2. What happens if clientele changes from original plan?

A13: The City of Mount Pearl and Council can set conditions of Approval in the Development Permit. If the occupancy changes or deviates from what has been approved, the City has the power to revoke the Occupancy permit until all conditions in the Development Approval have been met (MP).

3. What is the next step in the process after the Briefing Session?

A14: After the Briefing Session, additional information may be requested from the applicant and a report is finalized and presented to the Planning, Engineering and Development Committee (PEDC). PEDC review and make a recommendation to forward to Council for review at Committee of the Whole (COTW) and Regular Council. If the proposed development is approved by Council at a public meeting, a Development Permit is issued, outlining conditions of the development (MP).

4. Is a permit required by the City by the proponent? If so, does Council have the power to revoke?

A15: Yes, a Development Permit is required for this proposed development. As mentioned above in question 13, if conditions within a Development Permit are not met, Council does have the power to revoke approved permit (MP).

5. What clientele will be residing at 871-873 Topsail Road should this development be approved?

A1: Through their outreach work, Open Hands NL has identified an increasing demand for safe shelter for clients fleeing IPV (interpersonal violence) who also have a history of substance use and/or incarceration. Our vision is to provide a safe and home-like environment where they have access to trauma-informed programming in a supervised environment (OH).

6. What security measures would be in place at this location?

A2: We've built the purchase of a modern security system into our budget; one that will be monitored 24/7. The building will be well-secured with a key fob system and every room will have a panic button. Visits must be arranged ahead of time and will only be permitted during certain hours and within common areas (OH).

7. What percentage of potential clients are expected to be criminals and/or rehabilitating from drug use? What percentage are expected to be fleeing domestic abuse?

A3: 100% of our clients will be victims of sexual or domestic violence. The gap in the current system of supports we're hoping to fill is for victims of sexual violence who also have a history of substance use disorder and/or a criminal record. In many cases, our client's history of substance use or past criminal charges are primarily because of their abusive relationships and OHNL's goal is to provide them with a safe environment where they'll have better options as long as they follow our program, they will be welcome (OH).

8. What policies will be in place for the residents?

A4: All residents will be required to sign a contract that will clearly outline what's expected of them. We're consulting with End Homelessness St. John's for the development of our policies and procedures with the aim to replicate the infrastructure they've put in place at 106 Airport Road Transitional Housing (OH).

9. What happens to the children of mothers who would be residing at 871-873 Topsail Road?

A5: That's a question for the Dept of Children Seniors and Social Development. We are not involved in any decisions regarding the children (OH).

10. What measures are in place to prevent abusive partners from entering the facility?

A6: We've built the purchase of a modern security system into our budget; one that will be monitored 24/7. The building will be well-secured with a key fob system and every room will have a panic button (OH).

11. What are the benefits and risks of such a development in this neighbourhood?

A7: There will always be risks when initiating a new venture in any neighbourhood but from our perspective on the front lines of trying to access supports for these vulnerable women, the risk of not doing it will be even worse. The benefits are many, but the biggest is the donation of the building and commitment of ongoing support from Pat and Stella Perham. This project wouldn't be possible without them. The building is surrounded by commercial properties with some residential properties close by; this will compliment the need for daytime traffic for clients accessing our campus programs but also allow for a less commercial setting after business hours. The proximity to the Topsail RD Collaborate Care Clinic and the newly announced urgent care centre are also highlights of this property (OH).

12. Who is Open Hands NL Inc. and what is the background of the owners?

A8: Open Hands NL is a registered non-profit launched in 2019 with a mission to provide a safe space for women fleeing domestic and sexual violence. Through our advocacy, housing and programming, we strive to build a relationship of trust alongside a continuum of care in order for participants to break the cycle of abuse. Our founder Michelle Gushue brings her own lived experience of domestic violence and over the last 8 years has dedicated her life to providing support to this underserved group. Michelle is a feminist to her core and she approaches her work under the philosophy that all women deserve an equal opportunity to heal and become their true self (OH).

13. What is the expected turnaround time for residents?

A9: Every client's journey is different and because our programs are designed a stepped approach, our clients may return daily for campus programming. Open Hands' mission is to build a community of care which doesn't evaluate clients using length of stay as a marker (OH).

14. What is the process to admit a potential tenant and expected timeline to move into building?

A10: There will be an application process by which Clients will apply for residency. Timeline varies based on availability (OH).

15. What programs will be offered to potential residents?

A11: Our current list of program offerings include

- Anger Management (Women 4 Change)
- Workshops focused on: Personal Boundaries, Conflict Management, Healthy Relationships,
- The Abundance Program
- The Self-Esteem Program
- Female Teen Intervention Program
- Art Therapy and All-Addictions Anonymous (AAA).

As the program grows, we expect our offerings will broaden as we build relationships with other care providers. Open Hands NL staff will be required to maintain a therapeutic working relationship among participants, colleagues, service providers and volunteers in order to facilitate the safe and inclusive environment required for successful community reintegration. We also aim to foster effective collaboration with community organizations to support housing, income, childcare, healthcare and access to legal support in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (OH).

16. As this proposed development is receiving Federal funding, what would happen if funding was cut?

A16: Open Hands NL has negotiated and signed a 5 year funding agreement with the Government of Canada that initiates once we secure a location. If the federal government decides not to renew, we'll be given ample time to seek other funding opportunities (OH).

17. What will be done to control drug use in the area?

A17: Open Hands prides itself on providing a drug and alcohol free space. Our clients are expected to sign a contract that they are required to abstain from drug and alcohol while on our property and participating in our programming. With our security setup; 24/7 staffing, daily room searches, and room checks every 1.5 hrs throughout the night, we're confident in our ability to control the drug use within and around our facility. If a client is found to be in possession or has actively used they will be required to leave the facility for a specified period of time and may result in the termination of their contract with Open Hands NL (OH).

18. What is the Community Campus and who would that cater to?

A18: The goal for the community campus is to provide a safe, non-judgmental community space for women who are, or who have, experienced sexual violence to gather and build a community of support. Newly graduated residents can maintain a connection and provide peer support to new residents (OH).

19. How many students would be expected to attend the Community Campus?

A19: Based on the proposal submitted by Open Hands NL Inc., a maximum of twelve (12) personnel would be permitted to reside at this location pending approval by Council (OH).