

4 February 2021
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█ Preston Street, Guelph, ON, N1H

To: Guelph City Clerk, 1 Carden Street, Guelph, ON, N1H 3A1

Re: Zoning bi-law amendment for permanent supportive housing located at 721 Woolwich Street

My name is Greta DeLonghi and I am a resident of Ward 3 in Guelph, a parishioner of the Church of Our Lady, and a hospital chaplain. I am writing in support of the proposed bi-law amendment that will convert the Parkview Motel into permanent supportive housing for the homeless.

I think the project makes a lot of practical and financial sense as it will use an existing facility, especially one that has already been accommodating housing-challenged members of our community for some decades. Ownership and supervision by leaders experienced in working with this population might also be well-suited to address any existing safety concerns. It might also enable professional social and health supports to have a more consistent presence and impact on the lives of the residents. While I am not a close neighbour of the proposed site, I understand the safety concerns expressed by those who live nearby. I have, however, lived in a downtown neighbourhood for almost 30 years that was about a five-minute walk from the Welcome-In Drop-In Centre. I remember hearing concerns from people in the neighbourhood when the Drop-In Centre decided to relocate to its current location on Gordon Street. I'd like to vouch for the Centre as having been a good neighbour and steward of that location.

I am also among the parishioners at the Basilica of Our Lady, who have committed to supporting the project should it go forward in whatever way we can – whether financially, in letters like these, or through efforts in kind. This commitment comes with the support and encouragement of our pastor, Fr. Ian Duffy, who wants the whole parish community to be more deeply and visibly involved in this and other civic efforts to end homelessness by 2023 and to improve people's lives in the community. Our church, like many churches, schools, groups and individuals in Guelph, supported the Drop-In Centre's founder Sister Christine and the centre's work and solidarity with the homeless over the years. I'd like to affirm the important role the centre has played as a visible symbol of the hospitality and compassion that we are all called to offer, especially to the poor. Perhaps the project at 721 Woolwich can serve a similar purpose.

Supporting the project also has ethical importance for me, as I work as a spiritual care provider (chaplain) at St. Mary's General Hospital in Kitchener. I recently met in hospital a young woman whose life was transformed by moving into a new permanent supportive housing site. But I have also seen and supported, in my three-plus years working there, a number of patients whose health and hopefulness were adversely affected by insecure housing. For me, and others working in helping fields, it is like walking along a river and seeing a person drowning. You rush to help them out, but no sooner is that person out of the water, then another comes down the river, and then another. At some point, we need to go up the river to see what's happening. And we find that there is a hole in the bridge and that people are falling through that hole into the river and often drowning. Homelessness or insecure housing is one such hole. So it is really my ethical duty as a spiritual care provider – and really all of ours, as a caring community – to “go up the river” and address this hole in the bridge by doing what we can to support the project at 721 Woolwich.

I urge and encourage you to amend the zoning bi-law that will allow the permanent supportive housing project to go forward as proposed. Thank you for your time, attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Greta DeLonghi █ Preston Street, Guelph, ON, N1H 3C3 Tel. █