

Winchester Park Residents' Association November 2016 Newsletter

Bleecker Street AirBnB:

After many receiving many complaints from residents of Bleecker Street and other neighbourhoods, Toronto City Council is beginning to take action on the issue of “Ghost hotels” and short term rentals.

On October 26, 2016, the Executive Committee of Toronto City Council heard deputations from individuals who spoke from all sides of this issue. Neighbours from Bleecker Street and the WPRRA made deputations. During the day, City council had meetings with the mayor and council members from Santa Monica, California, and council members from New York City, who walked them through their own experiences with short-term rentals.

Executive council looked at a number of ideas. Central to these was the need for a business licence and a by-law that only the primary owner could rent out space and those property owners would only be allowed to rent one property.

The Mayor made a motion to have the staff report process accelerated with a report back to Council no later than the end of Q2, 2017. This motion passed unanimously. The next step will be a process of community consultations, which are expected to begin in January 2017. As soon as

dates for the Cabbagetown consultations are announced we will share that information and encourage all interested and concerned area residents to ensure their voices are heard on this important issue.

TCHC Area Rooming Houses:

The meeting of the Accountability Sub-Committee with Councillor McConnell and TCHC scheduled for November 3, 2016, was postponed to November 30, 2016. We were told that by deferring the meeting, city staff working on the Rooming House File would be given enough time to finalize their review and be in a better position to discuss a plan for the Winchester Park Area TCHC rooming houses. As you know the Mayor's Task Force Report released last winter made a number of recommendations on restructuring TCHC that included the possibility of removing the Rooming House portfolio from TCHC and providing for a different administration.

The 13,15,17 and 19 Winchester Street TCHC Rooming houses are the subject of an agreement with Margaret's House, a not for profit organization which provides long term and transitional housing for women with mental health issues. TCHC has said the plan remains to have the houses vacant by early 2017 so that Margaret's House can commence renovation and restoration of the buildings. City staff are working with Margaret's House, assisting them to secure financing for the project. We are told this is well underway. We are all hopeful this project will advance in 2017. We should have more information following our November 30, 2016 meeting.

As was expected the drug dealing and other problems have relocated to the other area TCHC rooming houses on Parliament Street, Wellesley Street East, and Rose Avenue in particular. Tenants in these houses find their buildings are not secure with

ready access to drug dealers and users via front doors and fire escapes. Toronto police services from 51 Division have been present and have made many arrests, but the courts release these people after a few days and they return to the properties they were taken from. Some are simply visitors, which TCHC states they can do little about because tenants are allowed to have visitors. Where the drug dealer has tenancy the process of eviction takes an interminable length of time during which other law-abiding tenants have their lives made a living hell.

Over the summer months TCHC increased security around some of our area rooming houses, but it appears that the security presence has been reduced. We were told that security goes through the rooming houses twice each shift however tenants have said they are not aware of these visits.

Conditions inside these rooming houses are beyond appalling; this is due to serial vandalism inflicted by visitors looking for drugs and inadequate maintenance. Recent inspections by MLS and TFS have surprisingly resulted in renewal of at least one area rooming house license. Visitors to the buildings looking for drugs come in the night, busting open the doors, and occupying kitchens and bathrooms then leaving their dirty drug paraphernalia, dirty clothes, and garbage behind.

In our meetings with the City staff, Councillor McConnell and TCHC, representatives from the WPRA have asked that not all rooming houses be leased to not for profits and that any transition be considered in light of neighbourhood integrity. Currently there are 27 TCHC properties designated as Rooming Houses; this must be seen as over-saturation for such a small catchment. The WPRA board would like to see more diversity in the nature of the residences with a mix providing for additional family units. All properties need to have onsite management and adequate security, which they currently lack.

Hopefully at the November 30, 2016 meeting we will be presented with a plan for the rooming houses which supports a healthy neighbourhood mix in the structure of our social housing.

Star of Toronto Condominium:

Star of Toronto Condominium is located on Wellesley Street East between Ontario and Bleecker streets. They have named a person to the WPRA board and it looks like the condominium owners will become members of the WPRA. We encourage and welcome their membership and look forward to their participation in our activities.

Covenant House Transitional Home:

We had previously told you that a vacant area TCHC rooming house had given a long term Head Lease to Covenant House for a transitional home for young women who have been involved in their programs. The renovations and restoration of Roger's House as it is known were completed in September and the house has now been occupied. The house mother is there 24/7 and support staff are there daily helping the young women establish themselves and prepare them for independent living.

Annual General Meeting November 28, 2016:

DATE: Monday, November 28, 2016.

PLACE: in the party room at Hugh Garner Co-op,
550 Ontario Street

TIME: 7:00- 9:00 PM.

We have 2 vacant seats on our board and look to these to be filled during **elections to be held that night**. Two candidates have put

their names forward and will be introduced that evening prior to elections.

Diane Walter, Executive Director, Margarets' House will be our **guest speaker** and will be there to talk with us about their plans for the Winchester TCHC Properties.

Mark your calendar and plan to be there!