

Synopsis of Durham Region and Town of Whitby Low-Barrier Emergency Shelter Agreement

A Precedent For Integration Of Low Barrier Emergency Shelters In Ontario

In 2023, Durham Region purchased 1635 Dundas Street, formerly Sunnycrest Nursing Home, for the purpose of converting it into a 45 bed low-barrier emergency shelter. Located in a densely populated residential area in Whitby, the proposed shelter raised great concern about the potential negative consequences to the immediate neighbours, and Whitby community.

After several months of debate on how best to integrate a low-barrier emergency shelter into the community, stakeholders including Whitby residents, Durham Region Council, and Whitby Town Council created a binding agreement regarding the operational expectations of the shelter.

The goal of the agreement is to serve as a commitment by all stakeholders to optimize their role in the shelter's successful operation and integration into the community, in response to numerous failed examples across Ontario.

What We Are Seeking

We are seeking a similar commitment from Cobourg council to pursue an agreement with Northumberland County and Transition House, with clear expectations on how 310 Division Street will operate within our community. It is suggested that the Durham Region and Whitby proactive approach to community shelter integration serve as the basis for the development of an agreement with Cobourg, Northumberland County and Transition House.

Highlights Of Durham Region and Municipality Of Whitby Agreement

- Developed a code of conduct for shelter occupants inside the facility, as well as, in the surrounding community, with consequences for not abiding by it.
- 24/7 onsite private security deemed necessary to operate the shelter.
- Hired mobile private security patrols in the neighbourhood of the shelter day and night for enhanced security for residents and shelter occupants.
- A Community Liaison Committee (CLC) consisting of neighbouring residents, business owners, Town of Whitby, Durham Region staff, police, shelter staff, and fire department officials was created to allow ongoing productive communication and to mitigate issues with stakeholders related to the shelter as they arise.
- Officials committed to enhanced garbage and drug paraphernalia removal at private residences, businesses, and public spaces within a 500 m-1000 m radius around the shelter property on a continual basis.

- Whitby residents who are in need of sheltering services are a priority to be sheltered.
- The parties acknowledge that a low-barrier shelter space is not a “no barrier” shelter space. Living in community with other people means following the enforceable principles of a code of conduct, by-laws, and laws that apply.
- A direct shelter phone number provided to allow timely communication with staff regarding immediate issues as they arise in the neighbourhood.
- Dedicated onsite smoking area 9 metres away from entrances to mitigate loitering on sidewalk and neighbouring properties.
- Durham Region will construct a 10-foot fence around the property line of the shelter to provide privacy and security for neighbouring residents and shelter occupants.
- A commitment to capping emergency shelter beds at 45.
- Acceptable uses for the facility’s additional space in the future included supportive housing, legal counselling, administrative space, and classroom space.
- All future space uses will be discussed with the CLC and the Town of Whitby.
- A commitment for the Dundas shelter to NOT house a safe injection site.

Related Links:

<https://yourvoice.durham.ca/helpaddresshomelessness>

Please see additional attachment with the legally-binding agreement between Durham Region and the Town of Whitby for full details.

Optimal Community Integration Of 310 Division Street Emergency Shelter

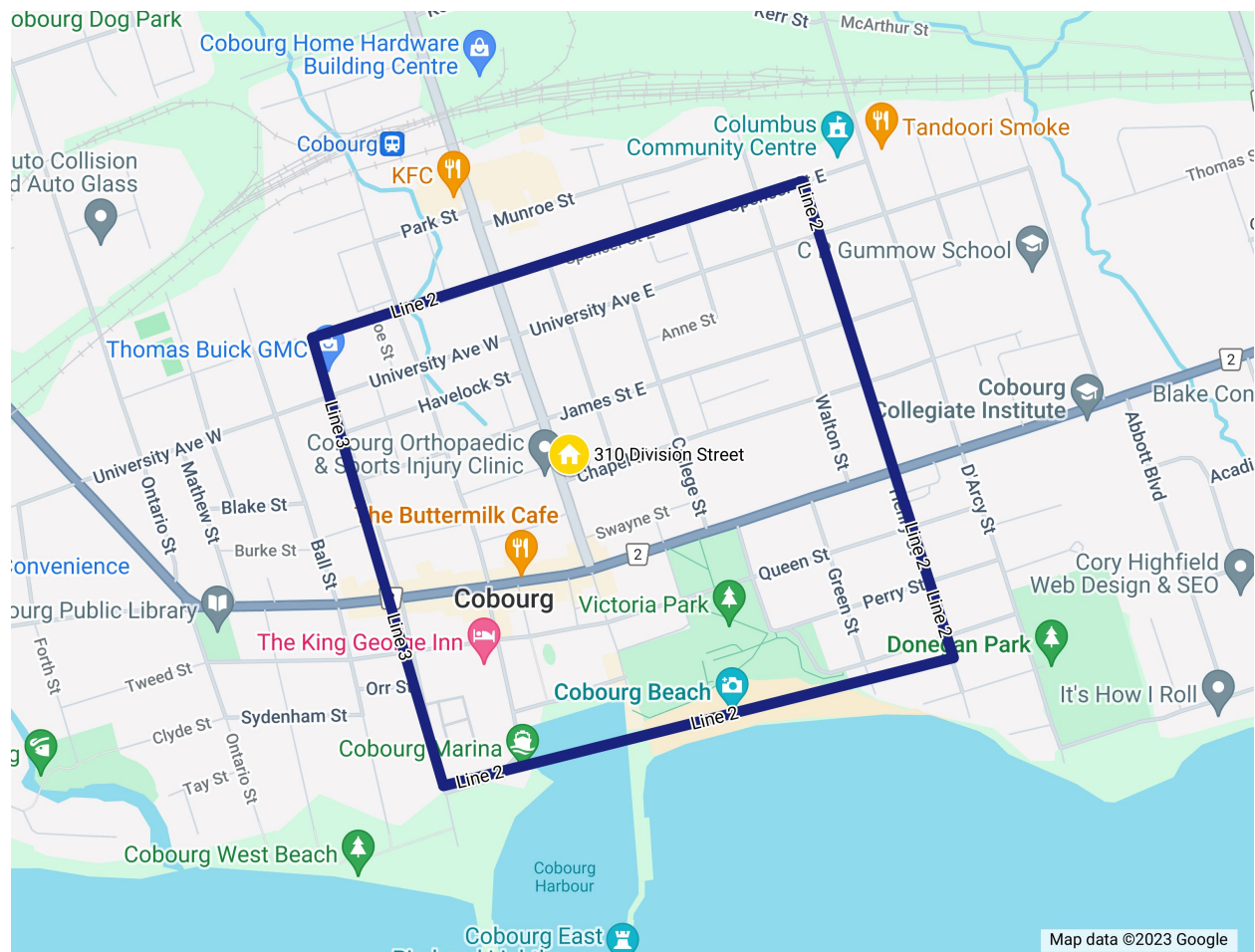
- 1 - Community Liaison Committee established consisting of all stakeholders to mitigate ongoing shelter concerns.
- 2 - 24/7 onsite private security to patrol interior and exterior of 310 Division St.
- 3 - Dedicated onsite smoking/gathering area at back of property with a privacy fence 9 metres away from the back entrance to mitigate loitering at front entrance, sidewalk, and neighbouring properties.
- 4 - A resident code of conduct established for inside, as well as, in the surrounding community, with known consequences for not abiding by it.
- 5 - A commitment to capping all emergency beds at 35 for 310 Division St.
- 6 - Enhanced cleanup of residents', public spaces, and businesses for drug paraphernalia and garbage by town/county within a 500 meter radius of 310 Division Street on an ongoing basis.
- 7 - A commitment for 310 Division Street to not house a safe injection site.
- 8 - Hired mobile private security patrols within 500 meters of 310 Division St, day and night for enhanced security for the community and shelter occupants.
- 9 - Supportive housing, legal counselling, administrative space, and classroom space are agreed upon acceptable uses for future use of additional space at 310 Division St.
- 10 - Direct shelter phone number provided to allow timely communication with shelter staff regarding immediate issues as they arise in the neighbourhood.
- 11 - Agreement by the county to maintain the interior and exterior of 310 Division Street in good repair, in keeping with the standard of county buildings and by-laws.
- 12 - Privacy perforated window film applied to all windows to maintain resident's privacy during the day and night, as well as, a consistent appearance for the exterior of the building.
- 13 - Lighting study by police and acted on to ensure optimal safety for neighbours, shelter occupants, shelter staff, surrounding public spaces, and businesses.
- 14 - Cobourg residents in need of sheltering are priority to be sheltered at 310 Division.
- 15 - An annual evaluation of the appropriateness of using 310 Division St as an emergency shelter with Northumberland County, the Town of Cobourg, and CLC.

16 - Onsite surveillance systems including CCTV cameras in appropriate interior common areas and the exterior of the building in accordance with regional standards.

17 - 24/7 staff to resident ratios maintained to reflect agreed upon best practices.

18 - Clearly defined roles of Transition House and Northumberland County with respect to management, decision making and communication.

Proposed Area of Enhanced Community Management



Additional Councillor Considerations for the 310 Division Street project related to town by-laws

1. Parking - Is there adequate parking for staff and service providers?
2. Heritage - This building is beside and directly across from Heritage properties and should maintain a front facade that is clean and in keeping with the neighbouring properties.
3. Accessibility - This building is being marketed as “Fully Accessible”. Are there plans for an accessible Main Entrance? Does it fall within the current guideline? Have all staff been trained on current accessibility requirements?
4. Safety and Security - Have Cobourg Police conducted a safety study? Has a lighting study, camera/ security study been done? The front entrance area is only 5.5 metres from the sidewalk and 7 m from the road making it illegal to smoke onsite at the front of the building. How will Transition House change the space to uphold provincial law? How will noise control and public nuisances by-laws be considered in this residential and commercial neighbourhood?
5. Traffic - Does the location being on a main roadway fit within the most current traffic study guidelines, especially with the daily strain of fire services, police, EMS requiring use of the main roadway to the downtown, beach etc.
6. Sanitation - This building should be maintained to the same standards of sanitation and maintenance as all other Northumberland County properties. Is the county responsible for proper garbage clean up and disposal or will this fall on by-law enforcement or town employees? Property standards and clean yard and lot maintenance by-laws should also be considered.
7. Building Safety - Has the Town of Cobourg been involved in the inspection process, including structural engineering given it's previous structural issues, change of use, accessibility requirements and maintenance/renovations taking place?