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PRESS RELEASE

CITY MOVES FORWARD ON ITS COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

With the ink still drying on its updated Strategic Plan, the City is moving forward to emphasize that it is indeed a compassionate community.

A very comprehensive action plan has been developed, along with important and valued partners, which is aimed at meeting the needs of some of the City' most vulnerable and homeless.

NEW PROJECTS AIMED AT MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Each year, St. Thomas - Elgin Social Services review applications for Rent Geared to Income Housing (RGI) to gauge the need for affordable housing in St. Thomas and Elgin County. This year there are over 800 individuals and families who have applied for RGI. The need is great. We know that this number is not inclusive of those in need in our community who are paying high rent but have not applied for RGI. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation conducts a yearly review of rent in the province and calculates the affordable rent for each community. In our community, an affordable one bedroom apartment would be \$579.00.

With the following new projects on the horizon, we will be able to provide more affordable housing and RGI housing to those in need. More importantly, we will be able to provide housing with supports to those who are most vulnerable in our community.

"The projects that we are embarking on will make an incredible difference to the citizens of our community. We are grateful that the provincial and federal government recognized our housing needs and stepped up to the plate, with significant investments. It is important to note that housing alone is not the answer, we need supports that will enable those who are seeking affordable housing to live successfully and independently. The community collaboration that is rapidly developing across the city and county will provide a huge impact and will most certainly add to the success of these initiative" states Heather Sheridan, Director, St. Thomas – Elgin Social Services.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

The City has acquired 10 Princess Avenue for use as a 24-hour emergency shelter and the potential for some permanent supportive housing units.

The Inn Out of the Cold will transfer its overnight operations from its current location at Central United Church and from the daytime centre at 423 Talbot Street to 10 Princess Ave to better serve the homeless and most vulnerable under one roof.

At 10 Princess Ave, vulnerable guests will also have access to important supports that they need in order to transition out of homelessness.

Inn Out of the Cold St. Thomas-Elgin is very grateful to Central United Church for opening their doors to us over the past 10 years! As the demand for the Inn's services has steadily increased over the last year, we are outgrowing the church basement and this new initiative couldn't have come at a better time. Inn Out of the Cold is extremely appreciative of the City hosting us in a building that will be tailored specifically to the needs of those experiencing homelessness. By having a space where we can operate 24/7, those we serve will be able to utilize services in a more effective and efficient way, connecting to multiple resources under one roof with the goal of transitioning more quickly to housing and required supports" states Lori Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Inn Out of the Cold.

In addition to the shelter operations, the St. Thomas Police Service will also establish a community office in the building to serve the downtown core area.

10 Princess Avenue will undergo some renovations during the winter months and will be available for guests by August 2021.

"The purchase of 10 Princess Avenue is definitely another step towards ending homelessness, while ensuring everyone has an opportunity to gain stability and support to lead successful lives. The St. Thomas Police Service is committed to having our Mobile Outreach and Support Team involved in a collaborative effort to provide the necessary wrap around services. The well-being of our community just received another significant boost thanks to this vital initiative" states Police Chief Chris Herridge.

Funding for this project, with a total estimated value of \$1.5 million, has been supported through the senior levels of government.

TENDER AWARDED FOR MICRO APARTMENT UNITS AT TRANSIT BUILDING

Moving homeless individuals into a stable, supportive housing environment is seen as an important step in their lives.

As an initial project to provide supportive housing, City Council has awarded a contract to Graceview Enterprises to fulfill the construction of 16 micro apartments on the second floor of the Transit Building at 614 Talbot Street.

Funding for this \$3 million project has been made possible through senior levels of government.

The micro apartments are planned to be available by September 2021.

CITY ALIGNS WITH INDWELL COMMUNITY HOMES

Complementing the many valued agencies in the City that focus on supportive housing, mental health and addictions, the City has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Indwell Community Homes, expert leaders in the development of supportive housing projects and the delivery of critical supports to the tenants of their buildings.

Initially, Indwell will lease the new units at the Transit Building and provide the day-to-day supports for the tenants who will make it their home.

“With our team, we’re eager to continue building strong relationships with local service agencies to support our future tenants. It’s been a pleasure meeting with some of them already in other contexts. I’ve seen repeatedly how a caring environment in a stable, permanent home becomes the foundation for transformation in people’s lives. I look forward to being part of that here in St. Thomas.” Natasha Thuemler, Regional Manager, Indwell

“Putting feet to its heart of compassion, the City of St. Thomas has shown exemplary and determined leadership with this plan. We look forward to coming alongside the city, other service providers, and the community to create supportive and stable and affordable homes in which people can thrive. Together we can end homelessness.” Jeffrey Neven, Executive Director, Indwell

230 TALBOT STREET PHASE TWO

Working side by side with the City, Indwell will take the lead in the planning and development of a new residential building on lands owned by the City which form part of the property where the new Social Services Offices are located. The new building site will front on Queen Street.

Approximately 45 new affordable, supportive housing units are planned to be constructed on the site within two years.

PLANNED FIRE SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE

When the City completed its *Positioned for Growth Study* to determine the location of new development lands in the City, at the same time it undertook a strategic look at where additional fire protection services should be located in order to meet the needs of the growing city.

Within those studies, it was identified that a strategic location for an additional fire sub station would be at the west end of the city in proximity to 230 Talbot Street.

To accommodate this recommendation, planning will be undertaken to facilitate a new fire substation on the ground floor of the new affordable housing project that will front on Queen Street. While space may be allocated for the sub station, the actual implementation of its use may be a few years off depending upon how rapidly the new residential growth takes place in the north west quadrant of the city.

Fire Chief Bob Davison states, "the construction of a new fire station at the 230 Talbot Street Phase 2 location will be essential in providing best practices emergency response (4 minute response time for the first fire truck) and public safety to the west end of the City, including the current and proposed residential growth areas. STFD is very pleased to be able to partner with Indwell on the design of an environmentally friendly, cost effective, safe and productive worksite for our firefighting personnel."

NEW HOME FOR ST. THOMAS ELGIN FOOD BANK ALONG WITH AFFORDABLE, SUPPORTIVE HOUSING BEING INVESTIGATED FOR ROSS STREET AT CENTRE STREET

The City is pleased to announce an initiative that could see the development of a new food bank along with affordable, supportive housing units at the north west corner of Ross Street and Centre Street, just north of the CASO rail line in the approximate location of the former skateboard park.

Working with Indwell and the St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank a project is being developed that would see the Food Bank being located on the ground floor of a 3 to 4 storey building that would have approximately 48 affordable, supportive housing units in it. In the early stages of this planning it is envisioned that the project would be ultimately owned and managed by Indwell.

The St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank, Indwell and the City will be working quickly and cooperative to plan and develop a project on this site with a goal of seeing doors open in approximately 2 years.

"The St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank is excited to participate in a new partnership with the City of St. Thomas and Indwell. For over 40 years, the Food Bank has worked to ensure that everyone in Elgin County has food on the table. As our city has grown, so has our list of clients. We look forward to working with these community partners in planning and constructing a new, safe and welcoming space for the St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank in our community", St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank

PROUD OF COMMUNITY COMING TOGETHER

"I am proud that the provincial government is providing essential support of over \$920,000 for a new shelter in the City as part of our over \$3.3 million investment to help protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable St. Thomas neighbours," said Jeff Yurek, MPP. "It is critical that all members of this community have a safe and warm place to call home during these challenging times."

"I am thrilled to see the St. Thomas of City move forward with their Compassionate Community Strategic Objective, as these projects are exactly what our community needs at this time," stated Karen Vecchio, MP. "Many families and individuals have found themselves without adequate housing during these unprecedented times. All levels of government must work together to address these issues and adapt a comprehensive response including wrap-around services that provides a strong foundation for those in need."

"I cannot overstate how proud I am to be the Mayor of this great City and to witness the dynamic growth and positive momentum that is taking place within our community, that which is shaping an exciting future ahead. Having said that, the City cannot ignore the fact that we have many individuals in crisis who find themselves very disadvantaged, homeless and who suffer from mental health and addiction issues. I am overwhelmed by the coordination of so many valued community partners and the financial contributions from senior levels of government that have come together to address the challenges of our

most vulnerable, head on. All of these efforts, including the work of City Council, truly demonstrates that St. Thomas is indeed a compassionate community” states Mayor Joe Preston.

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