



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: January 29, 2008
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Meeting Date: February 14, 2008

TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
FROM: Director of Current Planning in Consultation with Director of Social Planning
SUBJECT: Special Needs Residential Facility (SNRF) - 655 East 49th Avenue
Development Application Number DE411375

CONSIDERATION

A. THAT the Director of Planning be advised that Council would favour approval of the proposed Special Needs Residential Facility submitted under DE411375, subject to a time-limited Development Permit and the naming of a neighbourhood liaison person.

OR

B. THAT the Director of Planning be advised that Council would not favour approval of the proposed Special Needs Residential Facility at 655 East 49th Avenue.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services submits the foregoing for CONSIDERATION.

COUNCIL POLICY

On September 27, 1983, Council adopted the Special Needs Residential Facility Guidelines for conditional use approval of a special needs residential facility.

PURPOSE

This report seeks Council's advice regarding a development application submitted by the Place of Refuge Society requesting permission to change the use of an existing one-family dwelling to a Special Needs Residential Facility (Group Living) on this site, for a maximum of ten (10) adult males. The Director of Planning is seeking Council's advice on the matter, in view of the significant negative response received from neighbouring property owners.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site is located at 655 East 49th Avenue. The site and surrounding zoning are shown on the attached Appendix 'A'. A Special Needs Residential Facility is a conditional approval use in this RS-1 District.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed facility, which is sponsored by five (5) churches including Sherbrooke Mennonite, First United Mennonite, Vancouver Mennonite Brethern, Culloden Mennonite Brethern Church, and Killarney Park Mennonite Brethern, is to be operated by the Hope for Freedom Society and to provide a supportive alcohol/drug recovery program for ten (10) adult males. Accompanying the development application was a letter from the applicant (copies of which were circulated to the neighbours with the notification letters) describing in detail the proposed operation of the Special Needs Residential Facility. A copy of this letter is attached as Appendix 'B'. The contents of this letter may be summarized as follows:

The program is based on Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) Programs and requires participants to have completed a period of abstinence before entering the program. The Facility ensures a drug, alcohol, and violence free environment (zero tolerance policy). The mandate of the Hope for Freedom Society is to provide people a safe environment to become healthy, confident, and drug-free. Graduates will have recovered to the point where they can successfully integrate into the community and live independently.

The program will include daily 12-step meetings with group and one-on-one counselling. Participants will also be provided with vocational and career counselling programs.

There will be full-time supervision on site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL PLANNING

The Director of Social Planning supports approval of this application.

The location at 655 East 49th Avenue meets the City's Guidelines for the location of Special Needs Residential Facilities. The Guidelines suggest a 200 metre spacing of facilities in predominantly residential areas. The closest other SNRF is at 531 East 52nd Avenue, well over 200 metres away from the proposed location. The nearest SNRF providing alcohol/drug related programs is the Triage facility at 5616 Fraser Street. This location is just under one kilometre away.

The proposed location at 655 East 49th Avenue is in the Sunset local area, which has among the lowest number of SNRF beds in the City, with 1.4 beds per 1,000 population, compared to a City average of 10.4 beds per 1,000.

While neighbours have expressed concerns about increased crime and drug dealing as a result of this facility, there is no evidence from other similar houses in the City to support this concern. The Police receive very few complaints regarding the City's approved supportive recovery houses.

Staff have checked with the operator of Triage, which opened in August 2007. The Community Advisory Committee is in place but has not had any formal complaints and recently decided to meet every two to three months rather than monthly.

The proposed operator for 655 East 49th Avenue is experienced in supportive recovery and runs six (6) similar houses in the Port Coquitlam area. Social Planning staff checked with a Port Coquitlam By-law Officer and RCMP, both of whom were supportive of the Hope for Freedom Society and its work in Port Coquitlam. We also checked with Fraser Health Authority Licensing and Addictions staff, who have no issues or complaints with this operator. The fact that the sponsoring Churches have agreed to contribute funding to the operation is also positive.

If approved, the house at 655 East 49th Avenue will have a time-limited permit and the operator will be expected to name a liaison person to whom neighbours may direct any concerns, and to keep records of any concerns and the response made. The record of any actual problems neighbours experience, and the operator's response will be considered prior to any future extension of the permit.

Based on the specifics of this application and staff experience with other similar houses, the Director of Social Planning supports approval of the application.

NOTIFICATION

As part of the review of this development application, 141 neighbouring property owners were notified of the proposal. In response, Planning staff received a total of 17 individual letters of objection (4 of these were from outside the notification area) and petitions from the South Hill BIA (99 signatures), BC Khalsa Darbar Society (250 signatures), Universal Buddhist Temple (231 signatures) and two community petitions (combined 275 signatures).

A notification summary map is attached as part of Appendix 'A'.

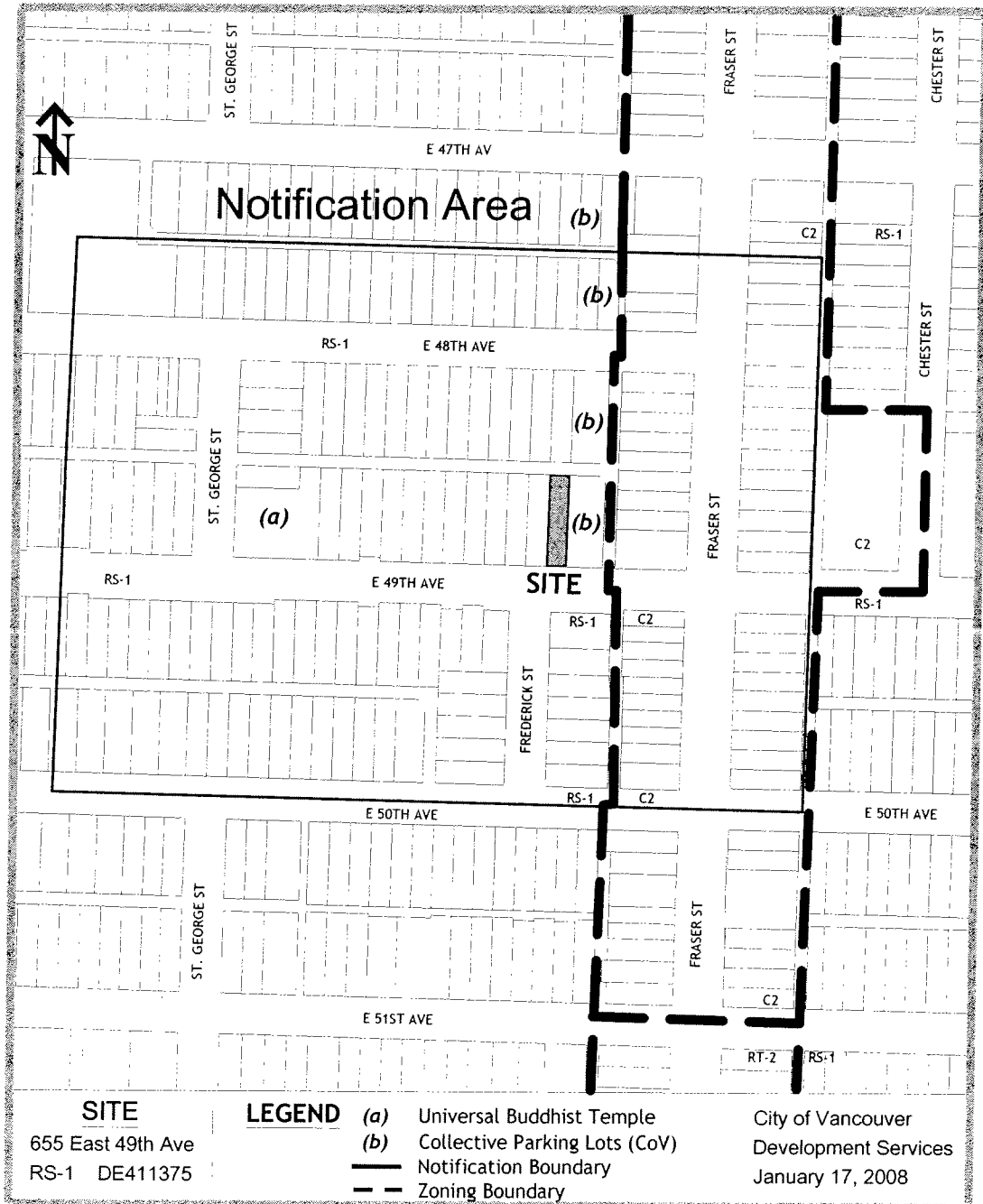
A summary of the neighbourhood objections is as follows:

- too many recovery facilities in the area;
- these facilities will bring crime to the area;
- these facilities will see an increase in the public drunkenness and drug use to the area;
- the proposed development will have a severe detrimental effect on the community;
- and
- there is no testing done at the facility to determine if the individuals have had a relapse.

CONCLUSION

The proposal meets the provisions within the Council-approved Special Needs Residential Facility Guidelines and the operator does have experience with other successful operations of this type, however the area residents and businesses have expressed significant concerns with the proposal. The Director of Planning is inclined to support the proposal, however, before making a final decision, is seeking any advice Council may wish to provide.

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Place of Refuge Society Fact Sheet

Place of Refuge Society is a Christian organization that is applying to provide transitional living accommodations, at **655 East 49th Avenue**, for people recovering from alcohol and drug addictions. Our application includes a request for relaxation of the 3 vehicle on-site parking requirement to 2 vehicle on-site parking. Our clients typically do not own vehicles and visitors will have the option of using the public parking immediately east of the building.

Our program is:

- based on Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.) Programs, Place of Refuge is a 12-step program with Christ identified as the higher power, although services are open to all regardless of faith commitment or participation
- requires participants to have completed a period of abstinence before entering the program, and is committed to abstinence-based recovery.
- ensures a drug, alcohol and violence free environment (zero tolerance policy)

We are rooted in the church and rely on donations and volunteers. This project is the work of five South Vancouver churches, Mennonite Central Committee BC and Hope for Freedom Society. The sponsoring Churches are:

- .1. Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, 7155 Sherbrooke Street
- .2. First United Mennonite Church, 659 E 52nd Avenue
- .3. Vancouver Mennonite Brethern Church, 5887 Prince Edward Street
- .4. Culloden Mennonite Brethern Church, 6060 Culloden Street
- .5. Killarney Park Mennonite Brethern Church, 6426 Kerr Street

Our mandate is to provide a safe environment for people to become healthy, confident and drug-free. We consider dependency to be a physical, mental and spiritual disease and the chemically dependent person to be deserving of the same respect and dignity afforded to persons afflicted with any other illness. We believe that individuals can recover from their disease and can rebuild abstinent, productive lives. Our program graduates will have recovered to the point where they can successfully integrate into the community and live independently.

Program:

- daily 12-step meetings (A.A. or N.A.)
- highly structured, full daily schedule
- group and one-on-one counseling
- 10 week Life Skills program centering on:
 - .1. communication skills
 - .2. conflict resolution
 - .3. anger management
 - .4. maintaining healthy relationships
- vocational and career counseling

- meditation and spiritual counseling
- regular household and maintenance responsibilities
- buddy system

Target Group:

- clients who have successfully completed detox and initial treatment elsewhere
- clients who require follow up to initial recovery
- clients committed to 90 days (some clients may stay as long as 9 months) of treatment
- open to all regardless of faith commitment or participation
- 10 full-time clients

Staffing and Supervision:

- full-time supervision, on site 24 hrs. a day, 7 days a week
- professionally trained counsellors and facilitators
- resource people in related fields e.g. Life Skills Programs
- volunteers from the sponsoring churches
- managed by Hope for Freedom Society which currently runs seven similar recovery programs in the lower mainland (website: www.hopeforfreedom.org)

Hours of Operation:

- residential
- 24 hr supervision
- structured programs run 10 hrs a day, 7 days a week

Referral Process:

- judicial system
- social services
- client referrals
- website inquiries
- word of mouth

Funding:

- client contributions
- donations from clients' families and friends
- 5 local sponsoring churches providing financial and volunteer support
- Mennonite Central Committee BC (website: www.mcc.org/bc)
- Hope for Freedom Society (website: www.hopeforfreedom.org)
- we do not rely on any government funding

Contact information:

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