



**Special Use Permit Request for 207 and 209 East Valley Lane
Notes from Neighborhood Meeting on 8/24/21**

Invitations were distributed via USPS/First Class mail to all 208 residences within 700 feet of the property. Text messages were also sent to 2,000 cell phone users in the immediate neighborhood surrounding the property.

Approximately 50 people attended the meeting. Not all attendees agreed to provide their Name/Address on the sign in sheet – at least three people who did not sign in said they were direct neighbors during the Q&A session. For those who did sign, a copy of the sign in sheets are attached.

Informational Presentation Portion:

The meeting was held at WynBurg Café at 306 East Rand Rd. Meeting began at 7:00pm and lasted until approximately 9:00 pm.

Carina Santa Maria, Shelter's Executive Director, gave a PowerPoint presentation, informing attendees about the TLP.

During the presentation, two men got up and left after taking pictures. One additional man left after that at 7:10pm.

Q&A Portion:

Why, if [the TLP clients] are 17-21 years old, do you have a curfew? And have to call police if they are out after curfew?

DCFS requirements for the program. We call to file documentation.

What is the success rate?

Caitlin answers - it looks different for every person! Individualized goals.

Are they generally there until age 21?

They leave before they turn 21.

Average stay?

Average is 2 years.

Shelter Clinical staff explains more details about the program.

Why our neighborhood? Why are you bringing in these kids? Why my neighborhood?

The Transitional Living Program has been here in Arlington Heights since 2012. The young people in our program are already here, they are students in our schools, work at local businesses and restaurants, and you have probably interacted with them and didn't know it. They deserve to live here too, and they are already part of our community.

Person worried about bus stop. Why did you choose this location?

There is no reason for the bus stop to change. We will look into your concerns about the bus stop, but again the reason why this location was chosen is because the employment opportunities are within walking distance, and they will be able to keep their work commitments and appointments.

Arlington Heights resident Arlen Gould introduces himself as a School District 21 board member and introduces fellow D21 board member Debbie McAtee, who tells a real-life story in the community about a teenager she knows who was helped by Shelter. Arlen also introduces State Senator Ann Gillespie, who explains her knowledge of Shelter, Inc.

How many people here have lived in a neighborhood with a TLP?

4 people raised their hands.

These are duplexes that are going to house 6 men each, is that right?

6 young people.

So how many bedrooms are there?

There are 3 bedrooms in each.

So you have 6 bedrooms for 12 young men? Will there be just young men, or will it be mixed?

We are at this point, gender neutral. So we use the phrase Assigned Male At Birth (AMAB) but we know that, and we are LGBTQ friendly. And so there are youth that do come to us and we respect them and their gender identity, and we try to make them feel comfortable.

Do you know the square footage of each of these bedrooms?

I don't have that off the top of my head, but we do have that information. But the rooms are bigger, and they will have more bathrooms available to them. There is a bigger kitchen, living room, dining room, and they will have a recreation area.

Is that in the living room?

It is an additional space with a pool table, foosball table, just a space to hang out.

And where is that located?

That will be in the basement.

Can you tell me if there is someone there that is responsible for these children 24/7?

24 hours a day, fully staffed.

Where do they [the staff] sleep?

They do not sleep.

So they [the staff] don't have a bedroom?

No, they [staff] are in their space all the time. So even when the young people are sleeping, we go into their bedrooms and make sure that they are still there. We have cameras around the facility, we have alarms on the windows, so we know every move that they [clients] make.

Do they dispense medication in the home?

We have trained staff to dispense medication, no one has access to their own medication.

So some of these people are on medication?

Correct.

Can you talk a little bit about any restrictions that you put in place regarding cars?

So they have a two car garage and a driveway.

So are they allowed or not allowed to have any cars at all?

Yes they are allowed. But in the past 10 years only two of the youth had cars, and they were not allowed to park them on the property. They were responsible for finding their own parking. So there will be no additional parking needed.

But you don't know that, so you can't guarantee that that is going to happen.

We can guarantee what our rules are, and that is if they do own a car they are not allowed to park it on the property.

So that means they can park it on the street?

No, you can't park overnight on the street in Arlington Heights.

So you can call the police?

You can and they will issue a citation.

Concerned about area parking. Woman concerned there will be 12 cars.

Carina explains it's just like any other home in the neighborhood, someone else could own 12 cars if they wanted to but there is not overnight street parking.

Woman says that place wasn't built for 12 people, so we don't know.

Several other attendees try to explain the parking again, and how it is not an issue.

Extensive discussion regarding parking.

Carina says if you still have questions about parking you are welcome to email us later.

You are a homeless shelter?

No, there seems to be a misconception about this, we are not a homeless shelter, we are a child welfare agency.

Man says, What are the stats on your current home? I heard the crime rate went up exponentially, do you have statistics on this? Concern about number of police calls.

I'm here to tell you, I do have the statistics on this. I can tell you that our calls have gone down, 90% of our calls are curfew, they are not criminal calls.

But criminal statistics do go up.

Carina says, actually statistics show that is not true. There is no evidence to support that claim.

You said that the apartments have a higher rate of police calls. We already have renters [in the area], why would you put "this type of whatever" on top of all that?

Arlen replies: it's a good location. There's good opportunities and a good home environment. I live down the street and I have no fears.

Hi so I was reading on your website here that you are supported by townships [lists townships]. So obviously those are large communities, so why not consider duplexes in those communities?

Sure, because we have already been in Arlington Heights since 2012 and we don't want to have to move our kids. Shelter, Inc. was founded by an Arlington Heights police officer, our Arlington Heights roots are strong, and our community has always with open arms supported us and all the work that we do for children in our community, and we want to keep them here. They are already employed here, they already attend our schools, we want to keep them in our community.

You say you have been here since 2012, where are your statistics about success rates?

Success can be really hard to measure, because success looks different for every person. Success looks different for one person than it does for someone else. I can bring information and statistics to our next meeting. After a client leaves the program, they do not have to communicate with us anymore. Some people do, they update us on where they are, but we don't necessarily know where they are going.

But you should know where they were when they left you?

Right. We do have those statistics. But after that, they do not have to tell us where they go.

Gina our Clinical Director explains more – I can tell you that 100% of our youth leave our program into a stable placement. They do not go to a homeless shelter, they are not incarcerated, they go to somewhere with family, friends, or their own apartment. 100%!

If they leave the program, that means they fail right? So what about those? What about those that don't follow the rules? How is that handled?

In the last 2 years we have only had one youth who left the program, who ended up incarcerated. He was with us for less than 6 months.

Lady calling our clients pedophiles, saying it's unsafe. Says she doesn't have alarms on her windows.

Carina says we have alarms on our windows because safety is our number one priority, not only for the community but for the youth in the home.

If these kids were abused, how can you make sure that our kids are going to be safe?

I can tell you that the kids that are currently there [at the TLP] have not had a single incident of any type of police involvement at our house, ever. I can tell you that the kids that we have are good, that they attend schools in the area. Do they need mental health services, sure, but so does half of America. And we have the screening tools in place to make sure the next group of good kids has the chance to live there too. We have the screening tools there, we have the questions to make sure that the next youth is a fit for the program and wants to be there.

Woman says she doesn't understand why everyone is assuming these are bad kids, when the reason they are in that situation is because their family or caregiver was not there for them. I feel like everyone is assuming that these kids are bad, my son struggled with his mental health during COVID, and I was taking care of him the whole time. So if these kids are in this program and need help too, they have all the help they need at their fingertips. They are taking extra precautions to make sure that they are teaching these kids and helping them grow up to be good adults. Half the parents around here don't do that.

Woman says I have fostered these kinds of kids, proceeds to discuss her experiences.

Where are these kids from, are they from the inner city?

No, they are from the suburbs.

Christian is from Lake Forest, and again all of our kids are from the surrounding suburbs. Again, they are going to our schools. They are suburban children.

I have two questions, first, it looks like you were looking at this property since February, so you have been looking for a long time. So how is it that you have purchased this property already?

Sure, so as an agency we were able to do that.

So you don't feel that there is much of a risk in buying the property?

I am confident in the work that we do in the community, and I am confident in the support that we have in the community.

Which means you have 30-90 days to finalize, is that correct?

No.

What is correct?

The house has been purchased.

You say that you have only had the TLP since 2012, so what was the program before then?

The Transitional Living Program started in 2012. Before then, it was not a Transitional Living Program. It did not have the same structure, guidance, and support.

So all of your reports are dated through 2012, but you have had that property since 1997. What kind of program was that before? How do you compare police activity?

Prior to 2012, that program was not a TLP, it was an Older Adolescent Group Home. The program, structuring, and mental health services, and requirements were completely different. The OAGH program was not voluntary either. So the program has completely changed and in order to compare apples to apples we have to compare TLP to TLP.

If that is the case how can you compare police activity at the TLP to the Circle Hill Apartments?

What I can compare is criminal calls to non-criminal calls. So 90% of our calls are non-criminal calls, and Circle Hill has a significant amount of criminal calls. So they are different types of calls versus our curfew calls. The assumption also is that every time we call that they [police] are coming out to the property, when that is not the case. When we call them they document it and that's it, they aren't coming out to the property.

Questions about curfew protocol. What happens if they are out past curfew?

Our staff and caseworkers are notified immediately, and we try to figure out why. A lot of times it is because the youth were out at a friend's house and fell asleep, or their phone died because they didn't bring their charger.

How many times does this happen before they are kicked out of the program?

Well, it's not criminal, but we do notify DFCS. We monitor behavior and meet with the youth once a week to discuss expectations and goals.

How many staff per youth in the home?

1 staff member per 6 young people.

Asking about number of cars, how can you guarantee that they won't have cars?

Again, really no one in the program has cars, and I can't guarantee that they won't have cars but they won't be able to park on the property.

Asking about screening process.

The youth that are there do not have a criminal record. We screen all our youth for aggression and we do not accept youth who have a criminal background. We only accept youth who want to be there.

Concern about home prices, cited study in New York about loss in home value. How can you guarantee in two years home prices will be similar?

There is no signage, no one is going to know that this is a Transitional Living Program. What I can do is I can pull up local statistics about home prices. We do currently have a home in Palatine, in the middle of a neighborhood full of \$500,000+ homes and there's never been an incident and no neighbor is concerned about their home price. In fact, when a developer came and asked to buy the house, neighbors said to us "please don't sell to the developer, we love your group home, we want to continue supporting." So that's what I can share, and I will follow up on the research about local home prices.

Neighbor of current TLP, Senator Ann Gillespie speaks: Says she didn't even know we were there all this time. Says she saw police come to their neighbors, and neighbors had way more police than she ever saw at our current TLP home. She never saw police at our current TLP and there was never a disturbance. She never saw more than two cars parked in the driveway. Says she never had any incidents or problem with property values.

Woman comments: She works in public schools in the area and comments that there is a lot of DCFS involvement. These kids are already here, and these are good kids from our neighborhood. These are kids just trying to have a good life. Help them out and be patient.

I can guarantee that our site will be staffed 24 hours a day, I can guarantee that there will be someone there all the time.

Arlen: talks about permanent support care homes for people with disabilities helping people, and how it benefits the community in many ways. The home prices around these facilities actually went up.

How do people find out about TLP?

We are one of only 23 programs like this in the state. DCFS caseworkers recommend the program to youth who are deemed in need of additional assistance and appropriate for the program. They do interviews and go through the screening process talking about everything. Our staff evaluate the youth and see if the youth is a good fit and interested in the program.

Question about therapy. How does the therapy work?

Kristie explains how therapy works. Differences between before and after COVID, home visits, office visits. Ongoing support to meet individual needs. Group therapy regularly. Meetings out in the community. Meeting needs for medications and other assistance as necessary. Meetings with caseworker. The home is staffed 24/7, 365 days a year.

Do we take good care of the home? Do you have a maintenance situation?

Lawn care and gardening, we have maintenance on staff. Environmental Improvement Team keeps an eye on things. Volunteers come in the spring and the fall to do seasonal yard clean-up. We intend to make improvements both in the interior and exterior of the home.

Concerned about 10% of police calls. What criminal activity?

Carina explains that the 10% of police calls that are not over curfew are not necessarily criminal either – mainly disagreements between young people in the TLP. Again, none of the current participants have had any police calls.

How often will I see police in front of the home?

This year we actually haven't had any police come to the home. Sometimes police will come by just to stop by all of our facilities and check in, but not because we have called them. Again, for curfew violations, the police are not coming out, we give them the information and they document it.

Woman concerned about parking: It is a major artery to come into our neighborhood, all those cars will congest it?

There will not be congestion. I understand this has been a concern, but this will not be an issue. Out of the 10 years of this program only 2 young people have had cars. Currently, none of the TLP clients have a vehicle.

If there is congestion, can we have a sign that tells people not to park there?

As we go through this process, if that's something the community wants I have no problem talking to the village about doing that.

Why are the village board not here? Why did you have this meeting?

I am here to be transparent. I wanted to be a good neighbor so I invited everyone to hear about our wonderful program. They're not here but that's why we are.

I don't understand why this is a good location.

Employment opportunities within walking distance, close to public transportation, community atmosphere. We talked to local business owners and they are welcoming and happy to have us in the area.

How is it staffed?

We are credentialed.

If you don't get [the home rezoned], what will you do?

We could potentially sell the property.

Are you expanding more?

No, we are not expanding more. We are a small agency, and we know what we can handle.

How many staff are social workers?

10 staff are LCSW or MSW.

What are the credentials of the staff in the home?

All of our staff are credentialed and trained. They have a bachelor's degree in a related field, background checks, orientation, on-the-job training, Trauma informed training, CPR trained. Staff get additional credentials through us.

Are they [clients] getting consistent support? Fully stocked kitchen? Family atmosphere? Is there a way to get involved?

Yes they have consistent support. Staff are in the home 24/7. Staff to client ratio is 1 staff to 6 youth. Youth get an allowance and shop for their own groceries. Many community members get involved and drop off food, like pizza on Fridays.

There are ways to get involved through volunteer opportunities to support the programs. There is a woman who makes sure the homes get a holiday meal for every holiday. We have really good support in our community.

How do you make the program LGBTQ+ inclusive?

We have changed the language of the program to gender neutral. We want to make the program a safe space and comfortable for everyone. We are very LGBTQ friendly and all of our facilities really value inclusivity. And several of the youth have felt comfortable and safe coming out for the first time while in our program.

Woman is worried about 12 boys having a frat party. How are you going to control them?

Alcohol and drugs are not allowed. There are no 21-year-olds there, they leave the program before they turn 21.

Carina explains how the young people in our program have not had a privileged childhood, and they are more concerned about being successful than “partying” as the woman had suggested. The youth are here to work on being independent, they are not here to mess around. They are like, “I need a job, I need a place to live in two years, if I don’t I’m on my own.” Are they young adults and teenagers? Absolutely. But should we be concerned about their behaviors, no.

Woman doesn’t want to see young guys hanging out on the lawn unless they are on a baseball team.

They have school, jobs, and play sports. The kids play basketball sometimes, and they should be allowed to do that. We have a grill and have barbecues sometimes in the backyard.

What are the next steps?

Upcoming planning commission meeting – hybrid meeting, both virtual and in person on September 22nd.

In the second meeting they suggested another area to put this home, why not there?

The area suggested was an industrial area.

Is that not where you are now?

No. It is a commercial area.

Did you check that area out?

No, the suggestion was of an industrial area. As a child welfare facility, I can’t ethically consider an industrial area. This home should be in a community, it deserves to be in a community.

What disruption do you anticipate in employment for the youth?

None, there would be no issues.

Arlen talks about how other communities have homes in the middle of the neighborhood. Speaks about how the Village of Schaumburg and Mayor Larson donated the Girls Home to Shelter. All other homes are surrounded by other homes.

What activities do they do during idle hours? Are they allowed to date?

They are not allowed to have guests over, but they are allowed to date. Caitlin does a great job of filling their time with things like financial literacy, and we make sure we have activities they can do during that

time. Music, activities, sports, choir, video games, chores, regular kid stuff. Sometimes they go on outings and trips together.

How do they get transportation?

McKinney-Vento Act explains school transportation, schools legally required to provide to the youth in the program.

Are any of them their own guardians?

No, DCFS identified the youth as needing additional support. They have chosen to stay within the system for additional support.

What happens when they age out?

We never drop them off at a homeless shelter. Move on to independent life, often their own apartment, it looks different for every person. Able to live their own lives.

What would disqualify someone from the program?

We by no means ever accept someone who is a registered sex offender. We are not qualified to work with that population. We do not accept anyone with criminal history, excessive aggression, if they are suicidal, gang involvement, and additional reasons.

Are there further education opportunities for the young people?

Yes, after getting a high school education many youth go on to higher education. Currently Harper College and UIC.

How do they get transportation there?

Public transportation, use allowance for Uber.

If they behave inappropriately, what are the safety measures?

If any of that were to happen we meet with the youth regularly and we would discuss it with them, we have a behavior contract. My plan is in being here to be a good neighbor, and I am an Arlington Heights resident as well. I want us to build a good relationship. If something were to happen, I would hope it doesn't, but if it does I want you to feel comfortable calling the house number. Or do what makes you feel comfortable even if that means calling the police. Our main goal is that we want to build our community relationship. We want your support, and we need your support, so that's why we are here.

When you talk about a BBQ. Have you done this before?

Yes, like a family party or to celebrate a birthday. We celebrated Divine's birthday in the driveway, we play music, bags, football, have food.

Woman says: I just want to say thank you, your goal was to come here and to be a good neighbor and I think you've done that. You have an amazing team that is committed to this community and to these kids, and I wish that I had transparency and connection with the people moving in next to me because often with new neighbors you can roll the dice. So you have created a very transparent communication.

Arlen: Also thank you to Wynburg Café for having us!

Woman states: I just want to say that I am fortunate to know about the programming that Shelter does and the impact that it has on hundreds of children in the Arlington heights community, and it's not really a question, just thank you to everyone at Shelter and anyone who works with them because you have made an incredible impact on our children.

Would you have looked near your neighborhood?

Yes.

Woman says we have a great organization but doesn't want it in her neighborhood.

Did you look near where you live?

Yes, and I would be happy to live next door. There were not any homes or apartment buildings available.

Why would you have them live in an apartment setting?

Carina talks about how our clients will most likely live in an apartment after leaving the program. So we model the home in an environment that will be helpful to them upon graduation. Our clients deserve a home too.

I'm not going to change everyone's mind tonight, and that's okay. We are here to answer your questions. Like I said, I am confident in the work that we do, and we have been here for over 46 years. We wouldn't be here for over 46 years if we haven't helped and saved thousands of children's lives. At the end of the day, what we do is save children's lives and provide them an opportunity.

As a neighbor, if I had the opportunity to knock on the door and introduce myself, would that be possible?

Sure! We had considered inviting Christian and Divine to come tonight so you all could meet them. But to be fair to them, we didn't want them to hear some of what you said. They have been through a lot and we don't want them to hear negative comments. They deserve support. But once this goes through we would love for the neighbors to come and meet them.

How can I get involved to help with academics?

Academic support, tutors, volunteers

Carina - Thank you all for attending tonight!

Meeting adjourns.

As people leave 5 attendees expressed interest in volunteering at Shelter, Inc.