



Inter-Faith Council for Social Service

AGENDA #5c

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October 6, 2004

Cal Horton, Town Manager
Town of Chapel Hill
306 N. Columbia Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Dear Mr. Horton:

In follow-up to your September 8, 2004 letter please find enclosed a report for Council members detailing the status of Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC) plans, including potential relocation of our downtown services from the Old Town Hall.

On October 11, Natalie Ammarell, IFC President and representatives will be in attendance at the Council's meeting to answer any questions that members may have about our downtown location and planning process.

As a way of putting the eventual relocation of Community House into its proper context, IFC would like to have the opportunity to make a presentation to the Council at a later date about its vision for the future.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Chris Moran, Executive Director
Inter-Faith Council for Social Service

Giving help and hope to those in need

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COMMUNITY HOUSE RELOCATION REPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the fall of 2003, the President of the IFC and the Mayor of the Town of Chapel Hill entered into a dialogue centered on the need for a stronger sense of ownership by the community-at-large of the issue of homelessness. From this dialogue emerged an agreement to convene a "community planning process." From January through the end of summer of this year, a group of individuals representing a wide variety of IFC "stakeholders" participated in discussions about the future directions of the IFC and provision of services to families and individuals in our community who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This group developed recommendations and then discussed them with the IFC Board of Directors, which adopted the vision outlined in the community planning report.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The vision outlined by the community planning group and the IFC Board of Directors is simple in concept, but will require unprecedented support from the southern Orange community to achieve. As we move to implementation and invite more involvement, we are already beginning to refine the seven key elements of our vision.

1. Modify IFC's service model to provide a continuum of housing options (emergency, longer term, permanent) and a wide range of support and rehabilitative services for men, women and children.
2. Encourage greater client participation in program design and operations.
3. Develop a *Community Initiative to End Homelessness* as a mechanism for broadening the community's involvement and "stake" in our response to homelessness.
4. Create a *Comprehensive Service Center* in IFC's Carrboro building to offer support services for the homeless and hungry and those at risk of homelessness. This includes:
 - a. Intensive case management services
 - b. Partnerships with community agencies for case management, job training and expanded support services
5. Consolidate food services (Community Kitchen and Pantry) in one location.
6. Continue to provide emergency and longer term housing and services for women and children at the IFC HomeStart site.
7. Identify a new site for the Men's Shelter and move toward relocation of services to a facility that will accommodate the envisioned continuum of program and housing options.

FIRST STEPS

As IFC and the community proceed toward carrying out this vision, several first steps are being taken:

1. Promote community-wide discussion and ownership of a shared vision for the future of the Inter-Faith Council and delivery of services to the homeless of our community;
2. Develop recommendations regarding concrete timetables, cost estimates and funding scenarios for achieving that vision – including site location for the men's shelter and development of options for use of IFC's Carrboro building;

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3. Identify allies and resources and obtain commitments for achieving the vision; and
4. Identify and obtain commitments from key stakeholders as to the roles they will play in working to eliminate homelessness in our community.

DOWNTOWN RELOCATION ISSUES

As part of the community planning process, a Facilities subgroup met regularly to begin to “frame out” the facilities implications associated with a Program subgroup’s emerging vision of a continuum of services. From the outset, a fundamental premise of planning was that client accessibility to jobs, transportation, services, and the availability of a continuum of affordable housing options were central considerations.

When the Program subgroup recommended consolidation of kitchen and pantry services, the Facility subgroup undertook an assessment of the IFC’s existing facility in Carrboro to determine the feasibility of locating food operations there. Preliminary review suggests that – assuming resources for space renovations and appropriate Town zoning changes – consolidation of food services at this site would be possible.

As the envisioned program model took shape, it became evident that the existing downtown men’s shelter facility would not be adequate over the longer term. Thus, the Facility subgroup identified several properties in the towns of Carrboro and Chapel Hill that might serve as potential sites for a future men’s residential facility. A number of private and public properties were considered as possible relocation sites. Many were eliminated as not feasible for development or because they were sold or had other plans associated with them.

MERRITT MILL OPTION

The possibility that the 3.3-acre parcel off of North side Merritt Mill Road might be available as a future site for the men’s shelter surfaced at the very end of the community planning process. This property is located in both the towns of Carrboro and Chapel Hill. In June 2004, the IFC Board of Director authorized board and staff leadership to proceed with an option offer to enable us to thoroughly examine the suitability of this property as a future location for the men’s shelter.

Just prior to the August 11th press conference announcing the community planning group’s report, IFC signed an option on the Merritt Mill property. When asked at the press conference, we indicated that we had signed the agreement so that we might engage in a variety of engineering, appraisal and other studies. At this time, this review continues and the Board of Directors of IFC has taken *no action* to purchase this property. IFC has had two meetings with Pine Knolls neighborhood residents and will continue to encourage more meetings to promote understanding about our vision and plans for the future, the homeless and at-risk families/individuals we serve, and how IFC manages its facilities.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Wherever IFC ultimately decides to relocate its men’s shelter, we will do so with the full participation and engagement of the community and with all the open process required by local government and our own methods of operation. The “new” men’s shelter will offer a 24-hour residential model that will provide a continuum of services guiding individuals toward permanent housing. The model that we envision will be similar to the HomeStart program currently operating in Chapel Hill. We would provide differing levels of emergency and longer-term housing with a stronger rehabilitative focus (job training, case management services, primary health and mental health care, literacy, budgeting counseling etc.) based on strong partnerships with community agencies and volunteers.

We are taking the very first steps in a long process that we hope will lead to more comprehensive services and more appropriate facility arrangements. Many, many factors will come into play as the IFC Board of Directors makes the decisions related to implementation of the vision. Among the most important considerations affecting our future decisions will be:

Our ability to develop a Master Plan that includes detailed, *sustainable* financial and facility scenarios
The outcome of ongoing discussions that must begin soon with town and county representatives with regard to establishing a viable planning/implementation process

Our ability to launch and successfully execute a campaign for the resources necessary to make facility changes in Carrboro and relocate the men's shelter

The level of engagement of the community at large with the issues facing the homeless and hungry and those "living at the edge"

As a matter of principle and commitment, IFC will continue to meet with affected neighborhoods and encourage neighborhood participation in planning and implementation of new programs and facilities.