

SISTERING

Community Advisory Council

October 9, 2018

Sistering, 962 Bloor Street West

6:00-7:30

Present:

Shelley Walters, Council Chair, Angel Hair salon

Sally McLean, Sistering volunteer and community resident

Angela Burns, BIA Member, Police Advisory Council member, community resident

Christine McGlade, community resident

Stephen Davis, community resident

Sari Stitt, Sistering volunteer

Kalli Anderson, community resident

Tekla Hendrickson, Sistering Unit Director

Alida Morris, Sistering Community Support Worker

6:15 call to order

Introductions

Agenda review

Minutes review

Results of flyer drop

- Pickup of flyers at Angel Hair went well. Main strip of Bloor and other areas around Sistering, between Dewson and Shanly covered. Only about 100 are left out of 1600 flyers printed.
- One participant shared experiences distributing flyers, and specific businesses who responded to the information negatively. Positive feedback and compassion were also received. Flyers were able to address almost all questions community members had. She did hear several people comment on the violence, specifically assaults to them, and say that they are scared of the participants and avoid the Sistering block. There is the feeling that we are asking a lot of residents, and we can no longer use band-aid solutions for these issues.
- Another volunteer had similar feedback. Questions from the neighbourhood, what does Sistering need to make it work? One person also had a question, what do they do when they see something happening, do they call the police? This group to discuss whether to suggest that residents call the police on the website.
- So far Sistering admin has received no feedback from the community about the flyers.
- Should the flyer should have Sistering front desk phone number too? Problem – people think any woman involved in an incident is connected to Sistering but that is not always accurate.

- Staff at Sistering are challenged with finding enough space for community members who come to Sistering for the social aspect with there not being safe outdoor spaces for women in the area. Other challenge: more “appropriate” services found by Sistering are not always meeting their needs; women would rather be at Sistering than at these other service providers. Sistering is here to fill a need that is clearly being demonstrated – both social and basic needs. The number of people accessing these services shows the issues within the housing system in Toronto.
- Numbers: Streets to Homes, Street Needs Assessment counted 8635 people living with homelessness in Toronto (per their minutes, number not officially released yet) vs about 5000 in 2017

Next Steps

- Do we have the sheet, *Tips for interacting with street-involved people*? Not de-escalation training, but suggested phrases and ways to work with them. Could we distribute that in the same way?
- Suggestion of secondary site, like with CONC, for the overnight program.
- Re: Shelter proposal: Sistering was not selected to manage the Avenue Rd and Davenport shelter; the agency was approved to be a shelter provider but not at this site - still awaiting additional feedback on the application.
- Should we put Sistering’s drop in number on the website? What are the possible consequences – reporting incidents unrelated, staff cannot solve all issues on Bloor St and ultimately don’t have authority over participants when they leave Sistering property. **Decision: Community residents should call the police in those incidents.** Putting Sistering’s number on the website will frame it as a Sistering problem and not a Toronto-wide problem.
- Next steps could include distributing the flyer farther east, from Christie to Dufferin, and south on Ossington to Queen, which is an observed corridor between social services.
- Re: Security: Sistering used to have security guards on overnight shifts when 24 hour service began; security didn’t respond or only escalated incidents. Security was taken off the shift and overnight workers were increased. Current security is only bringing clients up and down in the elevator, and is not trained to de-escalate conflicts or support participants.
- Idea put forward to form a Volunteer Community safety group. Inspired by the Guardian Angels in NYC, Neighbourhood Watch, Parks Ambassadors from the City. Is this something we can get our councillor invested in? Bloor West is also gaining more nightlife and this is affecting the neighbourhood too.
- Could Sistering and Community Advisory Council sponsor a community cleanup? Participants, neighbours, residents, volunteers building relationships and caring for the community. Invite Salvation Army, CONC. Continue the conversation opened up by the flyer.
- Common complaint from flyer feedback along Bloor: women bathing in their bathrooms. Sistering is currently renovating to update bathrooms and install more showers. Updated number of showers to be put on the website when inspections are complete.
- Re: Tips for Working with Street-Involved People: Source tips from businesses who are already doing that work, add to existing tips list. Angel Hair will prepare and deliver a mini training to their staff on the topic, possibly meet with owner of Wise Bar and put together something.

- Should we start doing staggered shout outs to businesses who support Sistering on the website? Include stories of how these businesses have worked with participants, built relationships, why they support? Six participants volunteered to follow up. Maybe outreach to boxing club since they reacted so positively to the flyer.
- Sistering Admin to follow up with peer workers ID, will probably go with lanyards instead vests, toques will also be made. Note that this will not make peer workers the designated problem solvers on the street, they are there to support participants. But this will make them more visually obvious as being there to support and keep the area safe.

7:30 Adjourned