

Providing Solutions That Recover Lives



To: Mount Pleasant Community Association Board, Mount Pleasant residents and business owners
CC: MPCA – Planning Committee

RE: Proposed Development Permit for a Multi-Residential Building (2400 Block) in Mount Pleasant

Dear Members of the Mount Pleasant Community:

My name is Lisa Simone, and I am a person in long term recovery which for me means I have not used alcohol or any other drugs for over 11 years. I am also a wife of 20 years, a mother to four emotionally developed and kind children, a business owner, a recovery advocate, a coach, a yoga teacher and for the last 10 years I have proudly served as the Communications Director for Fresh Start Recovery Centre.

I introduce myself only to share **WHO a person in recovery is**. In the last few weeks both the Mount Pleasant Community Association (MPCA) and Fresh Start have been overwhelmed with emails; some of support and welcoming, sadly many of ignorance, intolerance, hate speech and bigotry. We understand the fears are sometimes because of past harms or misunderstanding and we were looking forward to engaging with residents and business owners in Mount Pleasant with the objective of building a beautiful and nurturing home for people just like myself in your wonderful neighbourhood.

We believe everyone deserves a respectful place to call home and we were extremely excited to help in addressing misinformation, share our experiences, heal and work together as community. After a year in the COVID pandemic with the restrictions and isolation; now more than ever we must stick together and honor the value of human connection and respectful dialogue.

We are sorry to say that many in the community indicated that our proposed project was not welcome on 23 Avenue and 5th Street NW, with others stating that we were not welcome in this location within Mount Pleasant. Due to the way in which conversations on this parcel began we feel this project did not start on the right foot, and as a result, we will be withdrawing our Development Permit application and our interest in the 2400 Block project.

We will be making ourselves available at the request of any and all members of the community to provide education and support to anyone in Mount Pleasant that requires our assistance. Stigma is the number one reason why people do not reach out. While some may not understand what we do, know that we will always be here to support those in need.

Our Gratitude to MPCA:

We thank you for your time and we commend the hard working volunteers with the Mount Pleasant Community Association. Your love and understanding is felt and we would like to express our gratitude for your service and kindness. While we are very grateful for the support that came from a number of

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community members that contacted us and or have had dialogue with us, we as recovery professionals refuse to engage in a process that further stigmatizes those that we serve. We will continue to move forward looking to add much needed housing and community for those we serve.

As one of our housing residents says "In search of the best option for my post-treatment plan, I connected with a few alumni that lived in FSRC's Community Continued-Recovery Housing and visited their homes in the community nearby. They would invite me over for "family dinners" and talk to me about their experience coming out of treatment and into where they are now. I was immediately impressed by the great condition and comfort of the home that Fresh Start had provided them, and furthermore, by the continuous support of the Fresh Start staff and fellow alumni that surrounded them in the next phase of their journey. The choice became clear to me at that point – instead of moving back to my old apartment which I had kept during treatment and originally intended to return to, I would move into the wonderfully supported living provided by Fresh Start." Henrick

The FACTS:

- The proposal was for Community Continued Recovery Housing NOT a treatment facility.
- Fresh Start had no idea about a proposed senior's facility.
- Residents have continued support through our outreach department.
- Part of residency is a commitment to remain clean and sober – we are abstinence based.
- Part of recovery is living a life in honesty, integrity, kindness and goodness. Our recovery depends on this.
- A person with the disease of addiction will usually refer to himself/herself as an addict or an alcoholic even when year of sobriety are in place.
- Most clients do not have vehicles. When they are in the position to get a vehicle, many are also ready to purchase a residence.
- People in recovery do live in communities with access to bars, VLT's -the world is steeped in alcohol and the goal of treatment is to treat the inside of the person not to put blinders on to the outside world.
- People in recovery have children and are safe around children. NONE of FSRC's residents have sex crimes or violent offences. We have a non-admission policy surrounding those issues. We are mothers, fathers, community members - -Real human beings with morals, values, hopes and dreams. We treat the whole person physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

We implore you to learn more about Fresh Start and our role as pillars of the community. Attached are letters highlighting our service and role as good neighbours from our friends at the Highland Park Community Association and a message from a Fresh Start Program graduate to provide you with the truth about Fresh Start, our community and what we stand for.

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Fresh Start is a Community Builder:

The people we serve are your fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. There were many mistruths shared about our current facilities and operations. Some members of the Mount Pleasant community shared with us that they feared that our building and our presence would bring harm to families and children in the community. Please understand that serving families, children and building communities is the very essence of what we do.

Since 1992, Fresh Start Recovery Centre in Calgary has been housing, treating, and supporting men and families affected by addiction. Our evidence-based treatment program follows the disease concept: We see addiction as an illness that is progressive and often fatal if left untreated. **The good news is that with treatment and a program of recovery, people can and DO live healthy, happy and productive lives.** Addiction is Not a choice or a moral failing, but a disease. With treatment locations in both Calgary (men only) and our newest addition in Lethbridge (serving both men and women). We are seen as a treatment leader not only in Calgary and the surrounding area, but we are recognized across Canada for the interdisciplinary approach we take to treating addiction. We have been rated a five-star charity since 2007. We have received a Calgary Award for excellence as well as national awards for management and program delivery. Our outcomes are five times higher than the industry standard average.

Along with the two treatment centers we currently have 46 post-treatment housing in two apartments. Clients are provided weekly check-ins with an outreach counsellor, peer support and are part of a strong alumni network. Please visit www.freshstartrecovery.ca for more information on our services and history.

Again, we want to thank those that supported what we do because they understand recovery. We also want to thank those that did not understand and called us or came and visited to see for themselves what recovery looks like. We wish you all the very best in your future community aspirations. I encourage you to read the letters provided by our current neighbors and post treatment residents.

So, we want to end with this, should you anyone in your family or community ever want to seek recovery from active addiction please give us a call. We understand the complexities of addiction, the value of recovery, and we can help. 403-387-6266

Kind Regards,

Stacey Petersen, Executive Director RSW

Lisa Simone, National Communications Director