



ALTERNATIVE
LIVING
SOLUTIONS INC.

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Draft Communications Plan – 1908 Gerard Street

Situation:

- Alternative Living Solutions is developing affordable housing at 1908 Gerard Street pursuant to a City of Toronto RFP process. Funding for the development scheme was approved in December 2007. Site plan has been approved and building and demolition permits are available as-of-right (ie. no rezoning or OPA required).
- The development has been the subject of intense community push-back, which took the form of telephone calls and emails to the local councillor and the city's affordable housing office, and organized opposition at a community open house held in November.
- **We anticipate that construction hoarding will be in place by late-March with demolition starting shortly thereafter. This timing drives the need for immediate communications steps and the formation of the CLC as mandated by City Council.**

Objectives:

- To shift the debate to issues related to the construction phase of the project, as opposed to a debate over whether the project should proceed
- To promote telephone and web access points for communications
- To identify community concerns about the project and to minimize negative impacts of the project
- To develop a good working relationship with nearby residents and businesses
- While the development of 1908 is not the time to educate the public about mental illness, poverty or other issues, one objective will be to allay unnecessary concerns about the project

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Audiences:

- Nearby residents and businesses
- Attendees from the open house held on November 27, 2007
- Community organizations
- Media/General Public

Core messages:

- 1908 Gerard Street is going forward
- We are setting up a construction liaison committee to listen to the concerns of the community and to provide information on the construction phase of the project
- We are committed to being a good neighbour

Tactics and timing:

This menu of tactics has been proposed for the consideration of the City of Toronto. These tools are designed to increase community engagement in the project and to allay unnecessary concerns.

Stakeholder

Inventory:

We propose to further update our stakeholder inventory in consultation with the Councillor's office. This would include researching neighbourhood organizations and reviewing the list of attendees from the November open house. The inventory would also include adjacent property owners. This stakeholder inventory would be used throughout the balance of community engagement activities.

Target date: 20-30 March, 2008

Responsible: Global Public Affairs / Alternative Living Solutions

Door-to-door

Canvassing:

We propose to conduct a door-to-door canvass with commercial and residential properties within 50 metres of the site. This canvass would explain the project in lay terms and would also distribute the project newsletter (see below). The canvass would be conducted by project consultants and would also feed into special one-on-one meetings, as required (see below).

Target date: March, 2008

Responsible: Alternative Living Solutions

One-on-one
Meetings:

Where required, these meetings would take place with key stakeholders to identify and allay their concerns. In some cases these one-on-one meetings would be with Alternative Living Solutions or the project architect. These meetings would be coordinated by project consultants.

Target date: March-April, 2008

Responsible: Alternative Living Solutions

Community office:

We propose setting regular bi-weekly office hours for the Alternative Living Solutions staff and project consultants on-site (e.g. every Tuesday from 5-7 pm) so that neighbours can drop in to have their questions answered. This on-site community office would be open during the start-up phase of the construction.

Target date: March – April, 2008

Responsible: Alternative Living Solutions

Web site:

A simple brochure style website featuring basic information on the project and the proponents, frequently asked questions, email and telephone contact information, links to the City of Toronto, House Link and other relevant organizations. Home page could be updated to provide event information.

Target operational date: late-March, 2008

Responsible: Alternative Living Solutions

Update newsletter:

A simple newsletter update (8.5 x 11, two sided) would be developed to keep neighbours and attendees from the community open house apprised of the project progress. This newsletter would promote the website and the telephone number and would also mention the creation of a liaison committee. This newsletter would also feature a project timeline.

Target date: late-March, 2008

Responsible: Alternative Living Solutions

Signage:

Signage would be prepared for the construction hoarding to channel all questions and complaints to the central website and telephone number, especially with after-hours complaints. The signage would not promote the nature of the housing or the project, but would tell people how to raise questions or complaints.

Target date: late-March

Responsible: Alternative Living Solutions

Construction Liaison
Committee:

The committee would be formed to give neighbouring residents and businesses a place to have their questions answered and to raise concerns in a non-threatening manner. The focus would be on construction issues only (see attached draft terms of reference). Houselink would be invited as a guest for one meeting (probably the second meeting). CLC members would be recruited: 1) through a door-to-door canvass of immediate neighbours; 2) from recommendations from the city councillor. We anticipate 20 members of the CLC.

The CLC would have terms of reference and would meet three times: early March, June and September <check these dates; the idea is to have one meeting before construction starts, one during construction and one at the end of the construction phase>. The Chair of the CLC will be appointed by Alternative Living Solutions in consultation with the City of Toronto.

Target date: TBD

Responsible: Alternative Living Solutions