

Aurora Cares - Housing for All aims to highlight need for transitional housing as cold sets in

As the colder weather settles and winter approaches, Aurora Cares' Housing for All is hoping to underscore the need for transitional and emergency housing for men here in the community.

On Saturday, December 7, from 1 to 2 p.m., the group will host a gathering on the west side of Yonge Street, just south of Industrial Parkway, at the site proposed by the Region of York for just such a building.

"Aurora Cares will welcome community members to visit the site [and] we will have t-shirts for sale and hot chocolate," says Len Bulmer of Aurora Cares. "We are reminded as Christmas approaches of the good fortune many have, with our warm and dry homes, sheltering us from falling temperatures and long nights. We are reminded of our obligation as a community to ensure that we all have adequate and appropriate shelter. We reflect at the spot where a traditional housing project could be now already be completed and operating."

Indeed, Aurora Cares' Housing for All has its roots in Council's 4 to 3 decision earlier this year to vote down plans for a transitional and emergency housing build, citing location and planning issues. The group's aim was to highlight the value of the proposal in the community, to change hearts and minds on the project, and to highlight the needs of residents as a whole in the middle of combined housing and affordability crises.

In voting it down, Council tasked municipal staff to earmark alternative locations for a build by this fall. With a report on these alternative locations yet to materialize, Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo has expressed his regret over voting against the initial plan as urgency was expressed at the time.

As Aurora Cares' advocacy work continues, the Newmarket-based Blue Door Shelters, which hoped to operate the Aurora facility, has had a busy season.

On Friday, they are set to break ground on the redevelopment of their Kevin's Place shelter, while putting the final details in place for their Hockey Helps the Homeless.

Set for Friday, December 13, at the Magna Centre in Newmarket, the event will see NHL and Olympic alumni hitting the ice to help end homelessness.

"At Hockey Helps the Homeless (HHTH), we harness Canada's passion for the game to bring attention to one of the most pressing social issues in our communities—homelessness," said Michael Braithwaite, Blue Door's CEO, in a statement, noting that one of the key areas the tourney will benefit is Kevin's Place. "Through this event, we not only raise funds but inspire lasting change by working with local organizations dedicated to finding real solutions for individuals experiencing homelessness.

"We are so grateful to HHTH and all the participants and sponsors for raising the funds to help Blue Door create new and dignified housing that will remain affordable and supportive in perpetuity. Housing is hope, and thanks to HHTH, new housing for our most vulnerable is being developed."