



FAIRLAWN

Update on Our Future Options and Directions (October 2, 2022)

As you may remember, at our Session 3 consultation on May 14, the Fairlawn Forward team presented three strategic proposals or options by [video](#). Each represents an alternative vision that we find potentially exciting and believe may contain the seeds of our desired future.

Proposal 1: Enhanced Affirm Ministry (programs and services for queer youth)

Proposal 2: Seniors Ministry (programs and services for older seniors)

Proposal 3: Centre for Creative Dialogue (speakers and forums to tackle societal issues)

The proposals were characterized as examples of ways that Fairlawn could offer new ministry through a community partnership, allowing us to remain viable so that core elements such as worship, music, pastoral care, small group ministry, and other activities could continue to be offered. A straw poll at the end of the May 14 session confirmed that 97% of participants agreed that we should continue to focus on renewing our congregational work and pursue some form of community partnership.

Early indicators suggested that that Proposals 1 and 2 above both have elements of viability, whereas Proposal 3 might be more appropriate as a complementary offering in the future as resources permit.

Validating the Feasibility of our Options

In June, Governing Council approved the hiring of an independent consultant to seek out and validate community needs related to our proposed options, and source agencies who were financially viable and experienced in the delivery of services related to Proposals 1 and 2 above.

We hired and have been working with Jen Hinder, a long-time resident of North Toronto. Jen's household includes her octogenarian parents and three teenagers, so she has first-hand experience with both demographics. She was an active participant and volunteer at the Fairlawn Neighbourhood Centre and has volunteered and supported many civic organizations in our community. A member of Blessed Sacrament, Jen understands and believes in our vision of a community-centred hub to provide programs that serve our neighbourhood's needs.

During the past three months, as much as summer vacation availability allowed, Jen has connected with local, provincial, and federal politicians or their staff; not for profit agencies; and local service providers. Her mandate is to assess the current geo-political climate around prioritization of services for (all) youth and seniors in our neighbourhood, develop target lists of potential community partners looking for co-location, and identify sources of funding.

Discerning Where the Need Is

Jen has been focusing her research primarily on the neighbourhood around Fairlawn defined municipally as [Lawrence Park North](#) – north of Lawrence, south of Brooke, east of Avenue Road, and west of the

Rosedale Golf Club. Through her outreach and analysis of slightly outdated 2016 census data, Jen was able to validate our working hypothesis that this neighbourhood is underserved in multiple ways.

We have been told by one service provider that the Lawrence Park North neighbourhood includes the highest proportion of seniors over the age of 85. We have not been able to corroborate their data with publicly available information. According to published statistics, specifically the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (TSNS) Neighbourhood Equity Index profile of 2016), the percentage of Older Seniors living alone is 47.8% in our area, vs 39% across Toronto. By either measure, the numbers are significant.

Additionally, according to the 2021 Census, Lawrence Park North ranks in the top three and adjacent neighbourhoods in the top 10, percentagewise, of highest per capita representation of teens and youth, indexed across all of Toronto.

In terms of program and service capacity for both youth and seniors, Jen describes this area as a “Bermuda Triangle” of service offerings – i.e., barely existent.

Various theories exist as to why this is the case, with the most common being that this is an area of (perceived and real) higher socio-economic status.

We have learned that local agencies, some of which receive government funding to provide programming, have ceased service provision due to COVID-19 and a lack of affordable space. As such, they are currently not providing any “in-community” social services. Other community sites, such as the Anne Johnston Health Station, home to youth and seniors programming for decades, is being torn down for redevelopment.

We perceive the high need and the lack of programming for residents as a matter of inequity. The outcome of this scarcity of services contributes to a crisis of loneliness, as well as a lack of opportunity for social cohesion and preventative health care for both youth and seniors, particularly the less mobile senior cohort.

Next Steps

We are actively pursuing some intriguing opportunities and will continue consulting with the congregation as this work progresses. Sourcing and negotiating with qualified community partners, implementation of a chosen option and ongoing relationship management, in addition to serving our existing congregation, will require significant volunteer support and executive leadership from Fairlawners and others.

Governing Council has struck a negotiation team to carry out the initial evaluation and negotiation processes with qualified potential partners. This team has not only financial and legal skills, but also the necessary experience, understanding, and sensitivity to the desires of the Fairlawn congregation. The team will include:

- Steve Dunk (Chair)
- Morrey Ewing
- John Kimmel
- Kathy Salisbury
- Tom Salisbury
- Vicki Stuart
- John Wilkinson

The negotiation team will report to Governing Council and update the congregation on a regular basis.

Any successful option will be managed by a community partner with expertise and experience with the community being served. The goal will be to minimize the burden on Fairlawn staff members. Ideally, it would provide opportunities for participation and programmatic support from interested Fairlawners and community volunteers.

Ultimately, any proposed arrangements involving the building will require approval from the Trustees, Governing Council, Shining Waters Region, and the Fairlawn congregation.

The Fairlawn Forward team and Governing Council propose that we continue to assess potential options for a community partnership that will allow us to continue our mission while we conduct our ministerial search.

By July 2023, when we hopefully have a new Minister in place, we will evaluate our progress to date and set more definitive timelines for this work.

We have been – and must continue to be – courageous and active! We can take comfort in the fact that we will continue to evolve, and yet remain the essential Fairlawn, as we step into the future. We are a strong, loving, and connected community of people excited to discover where God is calling us next.