

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED  
**JOAN'S PLACE**  
NEW ADDITION CAMPAIGN

June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

Dear Municipal Council of the City of London,

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) has created an innovative project known as Joan's Place. Located within approximately 60,000 square feet at 329-333 Richmond in the heart of downtown London, this project encompasses 39 affordable housing apartments targeting young single and dual parent families along with a youth wellness hub that will bring together existing programs and services.

Community support for this project has been absolutely astounding. With the support of a highly engaged volunteer campaign cabinet we have raised \$6,860,000 in support of the capital campaign. Over the past few years, we have engaged community partners, youth and other stakeholders in the co-design of the space and the recruitment of community partners who will offer services in the Youth Wellness Hub to be located on the first and second floors of the building. The momentum for this project has been amazing; as evident in YOU's recent Breakfast for YOU in February when \$148,000 was raised in 12 minutes for this project; truly a heartwarming experience and evidence of massive support.

Of course, since February, a great deal has changed. The pandemic has illustrated even more deeply, the need for safe and affordable housing as people facing homelessness find such tremendous challenge in finding safety for themselves and their families. In addition, with the loss of income and the hardships experienced by business, the capacity to raise funds to create this vital project has been limited for a foreseeable time. As donors and corporations are faced with their own financial challenges fundraising capacity has been hampered; creating fears that this project will experience substantial delays.

We are seeking our Council's support to advocate to the Provincial and Federal governments to fully fund the project. Our years in creating the model have given us the benefit of having a well articulated plan and we are now in a shovel ready state but need the additional infrastructure support to bring this project to completion. As the Provincial and Federal governments look towards investments that can stimulate our economic recovery while also creating vital and sustainable infrastructure.

We thank you in advance for your considerations and look forward to future discussions on this project.

Sincerely,



**Steve Cordes**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Youth Opportunities Unlimited

## Youth Opportunities Unlimited The New Addition Campaign: Building Joan's Place

### About Joan's Place

Named in honour of the iconic Joan Smith (*see Appendix C*), this shovel ready project is located in the heart of downtown London. Joan's Place represents a unique opportunity for a high impact legacy infrastructure investment. Located at the historical gateway into London's core, the property anchors the city's heritage district and sits at the intersection of one of the city's busiest intersections at Richmond and York Streets. Since purchasing the property in 2016, YOU has created development plans that will include 39 affordable housing apartments targeted to serving young families at risk of homelessness and has created a partnership group of educational institutions, healthcare providers and other non-profit partners to create a youth wellness hub to be located in the ground and second floors of the space. The project has garnered extraordinary community support with \$6,860,000 in donations and has been supported with \$3,935,000 in funding from London's Housing Development Corporation.

YOU completed Phase 1 of the project in July 2019 and is prepared to commence Phase 2 when infrastructure funding becomes available.

- Phase 1 was completed in summer 2019, which saw the renovation and restoration of 333 Richmond Street. Depicted in Figure 1 of *Appendix A*, Phase 1 included exterior restoration, interior retrofit and renewal to current building code and high environmental standards. This phase includes four 2-bedroom apartments and commercial space for many of YOU's employment and career services focused supporting youth.
- Phase 2, depicted in Figure 2 of *Appendix A*, is shovel ready. Once built it will see the development of 35 new apartments for youth, with a priority on young mothers and their families, and also the Youth Wellness Hub (YWH), which is bringing together a variety of existing programs delivered in locations across the city in a single location; creating a stronger service system for youth and their families.

### Creating Community Prosperity

YOU is committed to solving youth homelessness in our community through providing affordable housing, delivering a range of housing support options in a Housing First model and addressing underlying issues faced by youth experiencing chronic poverty and distress. Phase 2 of Joan's Place is an essential part of creating prosperity for London's youth. The 35 new apartments built in this project will be a mix of studio, one bedroom, and two bedroom units. We expect half of the units to be occupied by young families. These will be permanent housing, but we expect there will be a natural turnover of units that will see the project support the housing needs of approximately 105 members of our community every year.

For so many of us, the news of a new addition to the family is a joyful time. For young women without stability and support it can mean fear, isolation, and sometimes a cycle of poverty that can continue through generations (*see Appendix D*). With Joan's Place, YOU aims to change that cycle by providing a stable home at the most vulnerable time in their lives. With support, stability and safety, young women, families, and children can flourish.

Joan's Place will ensure youth, young moms, and moms to be feel supported and embraced in a place where they can thrive and contribute to the fabric of this great community. Joan's Place will create hope and opportunity by providing our youth with the tools and skills they need to overcome their challenges and become part of the community around them.

A key goal for this project is to support youth through deeply affordable rents while also generating enough ongoing income through residential and commercial rent that the project will not need new ongoing public investments in the programming taking place within the building. Tenant rents will be between 58 – 80% of market rent. Our financial modelling shows this is achievable if we can fully fund the construction and start up of the project. Phase 1 of Joan's Place was funded through fundraising for Joan's Place.

## **Community Driven**

Within Joan's Place, YOU is proud to introduce the Youth Wellness Hub (YWH). Focused on putting youth first, and within a safe and welcoming space, the Youth Wellness Hub will provide comprehensive support services to build youth's skills, confidence, and independence. Services include primary and mental healthcare, addiction services, education, employment and training, housing, and youth justice. All services will be integrated in one location to ensure youth have everything they need to be the strongest version of themselves.

Through community partnerships and leveraging the services already provided in London, the Youth Wellness Hub is designed to partner with, and compliment, the service providers already impacting London's youth, not duplicating them. Our confirmed partners in the Youth Wellness Hub include, but are not limited to:

- Atlohsa Family Healing Services, providing supports and housing to Indigenous youth
- The Thames Valley District School Board, providing alternative education
- The Canadian Mental Health Association, providing mental health supports
- Addiction Services Thames Valley, providing addiction services
- The London Health Sciences Centre, providing primary health services
- The London Health Sciences Centre program FEMAP (First Episode Mood and Anxiety Program), providing mental health supports
- The Middlesex-London Health Unit, providing our community with kitchen-based supports in the form of healthy eating, how to prepare meals on a budget, how to cook for toddlers, nutritional guidance
- Province of Ontario, Ministry of the Attorney General through the Youth Justice Centre which will provide access to Justice services for youth in our community

- Employment training, placement and counselling through YOU programming

We anticipate seeing approximately 3,000+ participants engaged in programs at the Youth Wellness Hub every year. These participants will be accessing support through our partnership agencies and also through YOU programming, which intensely focuses on education, employment, and training. With the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic the employment and other community supports at Joan's Place will be vitally important in supporting our community's recovery.

Homeless youth and youth in general require a different set of services than an adult population. Many youth do not have the life experience required to navigate a disjointed system of various resources spread out throughout the London community. Providing all the needed resources in one location ensures they are aware of and have access to the resources they need to build skills, confidence and independence as they move from homelessness to a meaningful contributor in the city of London.

## **The Need**

To highlight the need for such resources in our community, we have included here statistics as related to youth:

- 24% of homeless individuals in London are under the age of 29.
- Since the closing of Bethesda Centre in 2012, London has been without a housing and service hub focusing on young mothers and their children.
- Atlohsa Family Healing Services will hold title to 6 units designated for Indigenous youth within Joan's Place. There is a significant over-representation of Indigenous people amongst London's homeless population and there is a lack of affordable housing and long wait times for individuals who are experiencing homelessness. As Indigenous homelessness is distinct from homelessness in general, the needs of this population are best met by a culturally relevant approach to housing support. Atlohsa's Supportive Housing program aims to assist vulnerable individuals in achieving immediate access to transitional housing; and delivering support to achieve long-term housing stability. YOU consistently serves a large number of Indigenous youth presenting a partnership opportunity for Atlohsa to enhance service delivery to Indigenous youth and young families that walk through the doors of Joan's Place. The target group of Atlohsa's supportive housing program are Indigenous youth women and their children who are survivors of violence, and Indigenous youth with or without young children who are survivors of violence.
- Youth homelessness is distinct from adult homelessness, both in terms of its causes and consequences, but also in how we must consider and apply interventions. Street youth, unlike adults experiencing homelessness, leave homes defined by relationships (both social and economic) in which they were typically dependent upon adult caregivers, whether parents or relatives. For all of these reasons and more, a youth-based strategy – and the services that support this strategy – must be distinct from the adult sector.

- 59.6% of homeless youth who are street-involved report violent victimization, meaning they are six times more likely to be victimized compared to the general population. As well, the more time a youth experiences homelessness, the more likely they are to be exposed to a number of risks such as sexual exploitation, economic exploitation, traumatic events, declining health and addictions.
- Youth who identify as LGBTQ2S make up 25-40% of the youth experiencing homelessness.
- Families experiencing homelessness/housing instability are often part of hidden homelessness (couch surfing, staying in motels, vehicles), primarily out of concerns surrounding apprehension of their children. The need for safe and secure housing for young families is critical in keeping the family together.
- London Cares reports that they have increasingly encountered more youth living unsheltered (sleeping rough/urban camping) over the last few years and that those youth report not feeling safe at the shelters in London.

## Capital Budget

Community support has been the key driving force in creating Joan's Place. With over \$6.81 million in donations and numerous additional in-kind supports, and a \$3.93 million contribution from the Housing and Development Corporation, the project has been exceptionally well supported. We are seeking a grant from the Provincial and Federal Governments of \$10.97 million to complete the funding required to build Joan's Place. Once the funding is received the project will be fully funded.

Building Joan's Place	
<b>PROJECT COST - Development of Joan's Place</b>	
Phases 1 and 2	\$21,776,748
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST:</b>	<b>\$21,776,748</b>
<b>FUNDING</b>	
Community Fundraising	\$6,860,000
CMHC Seed Grant	\$60,000
Housing Development Corporation	\$3,935,645
<b>TOTAL FUNDING TO DATE:</b>	<b>\$10,855,645</b>
<b>Remaining Funding Required</b>	<b>\$10,921,103</b>

## Sustainability & Economic Drivers

Through our housing units and relationships with partnering agencies, Joan's Place is built on a sustainable model that will ensure long-term success of the project. As you will note in the Operating Budget below, there is no new public funding required for ongoing operational costs. Between the

rental income and existing programs housed in the Youth Wellness Hub, there is no need for any new public funding to provide these services to youth. Joan's Place supports YOU's goal to reduce our reliance on public funding to support operations.

The economic impact of building Joan's Place will be tremendously positive for our community. The 18-month construction timeline for Phase 2 will create hundreds of jobs in London and the surrounding area, as we partner with local businesses to construct Joan's Place. The high profile site will be a signal of renewal in the downtown and will inspire the renewed confidence on ongoing economic renewal our community will need. The ongoing work of the centre and the programs within it, will ensure economic prosperity for the residents and the youth participants at Joan's Place on an ongoing basis. Connecting youth, employers, and community partners, this project will certainly be an ongoing economic driver for London well after the infrastructure investments have been made.

## Operating Budget

Joan's Place Annual Operating Revenue	Income
<b>Annual Operating - Income</b>	
Rent - Residential rent for 39 units	\$320,496
Rent - Youth Wellness Hub	\$206,883
Laundry income	\$3,000
Common area cost sharing	\$80,000
<b>Sub-total:</b>	<b>\$610,379</b>
Less Vacancy Loss of 1.7% Residential Rent	\$5,448
<b>TOTAL REVENUE:</b>	<b>\$604,931</b>
*Annual Operating - Expenditures	\$581,378
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES:</b>	<b>\$581,378</b>
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL SURPLUS:</b>	<b>\$23,553</b>

\* detailed listing of expenditures available – includes: repairs and maintenance, property management, housing support staff, contingency expenses, reserve fund investments.

## Our Request

Today, we are asking for your support in advocating our capital campaign to both the Provincial and Federal levels.

COVID-19 has drastically impacted our capacity to raise funds to create this vital project. As donors and corporations are faced with their own financial challenges fundraising capacity has been hampered; creating fears that this project will experience substantial delays. In order to ensure that the housing remains highly affordable, it is vital that building Joan's Place remains a debt-free project.

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With the architect in place and permits in progress, this funding would provide us with the opportunity to begin constructing Phase 2 of Joan's Place right away. We thank you for your ongoing advocacy for Youth Opportunities Unlimited and Joan's Place. For more information on Joan's Place, please feel free to reach out to me at any time at 519-878-1455 or [steve@you.ca](mailto:steve@you.ca). We look forward to hearing from you soon.

**APPENDIX A**

**Before & After Images: Joan's Place**

**Figure 1: Joan's Place Phase 1 - Before & After of 333 Richmond St.**



**Figure 2: Joan's Place Phase 2 - Before & "After" Rendering of 329 & 331 Richmond St.**





## **APPENDIX B**

### **Youth Opportunities Unlimited Overview**

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) started in 1982 as a community-based initiative and has continually developed and strengthened community partnerships. Each year YOU serves over 3,600 youth between 16 and 30 years of age in London and Middlesex County. We believe that investing in youth and strong communities go hand-in-hand. As a non-profit registered charity, YOU works with our community, business, and government partners to support youth by providing them with the guidance, support, tools, and opportunities they need to reach their full potential, maximizing opportunities and addressing youth's most pressing needs.

YOU delivers a range of programs including affordable housing, housing outreach, transitional support services, employment training, job placement, training programs supporting the needs of youth. The agency is well known for its social enterprise programs; using business models in offering hands-on training experiences for youth. Through its YOU Made It Café, woodshop and recycling service, the agency trains approximately 120 youth annually in essential skills needed for labour market success while offering a viable business model that earns more than \$1,200,000 annually in sales.

Mission: YOU supports youth to build skills, confidence and independence to reach their potential.

Vision: A community where youth are embraced and will thrive.

### **Capital Project Experience**

YOU has extensive experience with major capital projects and would bring this experience to ensuring a successful infrastructure project with Joan's Place. Highlights of the agency's past capital projects:

**Next Wave Youth Centre** – in 2007, YOU completed the renewal of a 3,500sf building it purchased in the historical centre of Strathroy, Ontario to create affordable housing for young families experiencing violence on the upper floor and employment and community development programming for youth in the main floor of the building. The project was funded through community donations and external financing and is supported with ongoing funding from United Way and partner agency contributions.

**Cornerstone** – in 2011 YOU completed renewal of a historically significant 35,000sf building in downtown London and created 30 affordable housing units for youth on the upper floors, along with varied youth support programming on the main floor including educational programs, youth outreach supports, basic needs supports and a café operated by YOU as a social enterprise. YOU created a partial 4<sup>th</sup> floor with a rooftop patio and meeting space for use by tenants, other community programs and is rented by business for special events. Funding for the capital project came from City of London, CMHC, community donations and external financing.

**Housing First Youth Shelter** – to be completed in June, 2020, this 30 bed shelter was created as a result of an RFP from the City of London. This purpose built building is located on property purchased by YOU in 2017. The shelter will be unique in that it is based on a Housing First model and will focus on

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connecting youth to long term, permanent housing and other community supports. Capital funding is from CMHC, City of London and community donations.

**340 Richmond St** – completed in April, 2020, this project is creating 6 apartments in a downtown building that had been previously abandoned and purchased by YOU for youth exiting the care of Children’s Aid Society. The main floor will have housing, employment resources and other community supports available to youth involved in the building. Capital funding through CMHC, community donations and affordable housing loan fund of London Community Foundation.

## APPENDIX C

### **The Smith Family: A letter from Lynne Cram, daughter of Joan Smith**

My mom and dad loved to gather family and friends around the dining table. Smith Sunday dinners were infamous for the spirited conversation as well as their ear piercing volume. The richness of conversation was a given, as my mother challenged everyone to express their opinions on politics and current events. Perhaps some newcomers found it more 'stressful' than 'joyful' and I must admit some prospective boyfriends and girlfriends chose never to return. Dinner was always a special bonding time for our family.

Let's now imagine Joan's Place, which will have 39 units (4+35) for homeless young moms, mothers-to-be and at risk youth. Imagine these youth sitting down to a meal that they have learned to prepare. Perhaps they are sharing their concerns about their pregnancy, or their sleep deprivation due to teething babies, or perhaps challenges with their job search.

This will be home, this will create family. Let me tell you a bit about my mom and Joan's Place.

My mother was an army brat who moved around a lot as a child. She was a trouble-maker and a self proclaimed rebel and she almost got expelled from school in Grade 10. She could have easily been one of these youth! Luckily mom was given a second chance after a lengthy meeting between the principal and her dad. Mom credits her grade 11 teacher for changing her life as she challenged her to 'Dare to be Different'. Young Joan then understood that she could be herself without misbehaving. She could be different in a positive way. She went on to be valedictorian in high school and while in University she became deeply involved in social issues, including working with underprivileged kids in the Toronto core. After getting married at 21, Mom immersed herself into community work, including London Housing Authority, Catholic Children's Aid Society and the United Way. She was now a 'Rebel with a Cause'.

Back in the 60's you stayed in hospital for a week after giving birth. So after the arrival of her 7th child, you would think that mom would enjoy a break from her motley crew at home and maybe even watch a soap opera or two. But instead mom used the quiet time to set up the basic structure of Vanier Children's Services, a desperately needed centre devoted to children's mental health.

While mom was a City Councillor, she stated that the City has a responsibility to those less fortunate, to provide things like a home and basic needs to keep its people off the streets.

**Mom also stated, "Community is about everyone contributing whatever it is best that they do. It is about everyone being on hand to help those who have run into a barrier".**

When I remember these words from Mom, I know that Joan's Place is absolutely the right choice for our family to honour her commitment to social causes in our community.

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Joan's Place has completed Phase 1 and the Youth Wellness Hub is already providing support services for addiction, housing, primary and mental health, education, employment, job training and much more. They are doing this by partnering with many community services that do it best and bringing these services under one roof.

Now we need to complete Phase Two. With your help we can get a shovel in the ground and build homes for these at risk youth and their children. We need to get them off the streets.

When I talk about Joan's Place, my focus always seems to be on the support that the young mothers will receive, so they can succeed on their own individual paths. When I chat with Psychiatrist Dr. Arlene McDougall, her focus is on the children. Arlene sees children being raised and thriving in a warm, supportive, loving environment. As we all know, everything begins at home, and Joan's Place will be the springboard for these children to find joy and purpose in their young lives.

I would like to finish with a very quick story about my mom. After my father passed away, my mother continued to live in our family home on her own. One evening I took my mother to a fundraising event that focused on women and children. My mother was so moved by the event, she approached the organizer and asked if the women could move into her sprawling home since it was silly to have so much space to herself while these families were so desperate. Perhaps her idea could have presented a slight logistical nightmare. But now we can say 'Mom, you are getting your wish' with Joan's Place.

Joan's Place will be just like our family home: there will be challenges, animated conversations, and colourful personalities. But, just like us, there will also be love, laughter and support for each other. There will be women and children discovering the richness and joy that comes from sharing a well-prepared meal with 'family'.

My mom always felt that when you get involved in a service in the community, you have to be hands on too. This building pulls together all of the work she did her whole life.

No family in our community is immune to these obstacles: of addiction, mental health issues, and even police at the door! But we had a family to fall back on. I really look at Joan's Place as a family to lean back on for these youth.

**We as a community need to get this done. We need to achieve our fundraising goal. We need to get this shovel in the ground, get youth off the street into their own homes, and get youth support services that will help them to succeed down their own, individual paths. And we need to do it now.**

## APPENDIX D

### Mackenzie's Story

Mackenzie has always been driven to succeed. But, as a teen, she realized reaching success wasn't simply a matter of "setting her mind to it". "I struggled with my mental health and relationship issues in my teenage years, and graduated high school pregnant with my daughter," says Mackenzie. Having her daughter months after graduation, she transitioned abruptly into adulthood and felt unprepared.

Worried about her ability to support her newborn daughter given the high cost of rent, Mackenzie faced a conflict. Without a job, she could not afford childcare, but without childcare she could not get a job. "I always knew that I wanted to do something with my life, but I could not get ahead," says Mackenzie. Solution-focused and eager to break the cycle, Mackenzie became involved with YOU's program, Training for Employment Success. Through the program, she completed field training at the YOU Café. "I had the opportunity to invest in myself, which gives my daughter a better future as well," she shares.

Working at the Café gave Mackenzie more than just on-the-job training. When her relationship with the father of her daughter became toxic, YOU recognized signs of distress, and acted quickly. "YOU supported me, advocated for me and connected me with resources. I was given the courage to remove myself and my daughter from a harmful situation."

As a single mom balancing college, work, volunteering, friendships, relationships, and self-care, there are many things to get done in a day. YOU gave Mackenzie job skills, an income, and mental health counselling. They advocated about her abilities as a mother and helped her find affordable housing. "YOU gave me strength," she explains.

Mackenzie and her daughter are healthy, stable, and growing. "YOU helped me find myself, learn to navigate a system that I felt trapped in, and become a strong and confident role model for my daughter."



**"YOU helped me achieve my goals and because of that, my daughter is growing up strong. I am so proud of both of us."**