



BOARD OF DIRECTORS' BRIEFING BOOKLET

(PLEASE SEE ANNEX --A --Page 10 for application form)

Mission Statement:

To provide and promote safe, affordable, and well-maintained housing in inclusive communities, and to mobilize resources for these purposes.

Vision Statement:

To lead in developing a greater understanding of, and commitment to, the expansion of innovative housing-related solutions within inclusive communities.

Introduction

Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI) is a faith-based federally registered charitable organization whose goal is to be pro-active and result-oriented in helping to solve Ottawa's affordable housing crisis, and to mobilize faith communities and others in our work to address it. MHI is supported morally in this by a number of faith community leaders in the city who are our patrons, including those of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, Sikh, and Unitarian backgrounds. Our membership is comprised of between 80-85 different faith communities and faith-based organizations from across the city. Interfaith discussion about affordable housing began in Ottawa in 2001. MHI was incorporated federally as a non-profit charitable organization in late 2002 and the organization purchased its first building in 2005. We now have five communities housing almost 500 people. This includes Veterans' House: the Andy Carswell Building, which was completed in early 2021.

As a charity, MHI is working hard toward building a culture of philanthropy into our organization, and throughout our membership. MHI successfully conducted our first capital campaign, "A Place to Call Home" from March 2013-Dec 2014 in which we raised \$500K.

From March 2016 to December 2017 MHI engaged in a sequel capital campaign called “*The Haven: A Symbol of Solidarity and Determination.*” The goal of this initiative was to raise additional funds to offset the construction costs of our project “The Haven”, which was in development at that time. When added to our initial \$500K, the total fundraised amount of \$1.25M enabled MHI to build 18 additional units — over and above the 80 units the government funding provided for — and also afforded MHI the capacity to offer 40% of the units at a deeper level of subsidy. MHI has recently completed an even larger capital campaign for our newest project called Veterans’ House: the Andy Carswell Building, successfully raising \$2.5M to help fund this housing community for homeless veterans. Fundraising is an important element of our growth and success!

MHI provides affordable housing for households whose income falls below a range of \$25,920 for one person to \$69,935 for seven or more people in a household. Over the past 10 years we have learned that the provision of housing through grass-roots action is a very effective strategy to raise awareness about the lack of affordable housing and to encourage people to work together to seek solutions. This is not surprising given that, generally, people learn best through reflecting on their personal experience and become mobilized to try to alleviate the social problems they encounter when they see the human costs they cause.

MHI now owns and manages 179 affordable housing units in five neighbourhood areas:

- ***Kent House:*** an older building in downtown Ottawa with 2 bachelor and 3 one-bedroom apartments.
- ***Somerset Gardens:*** 10 one-bedroom condominium units in downtown Ottawa.
- ***Blake House:*** an apartment complex on a quiet street in Vanier with 26 units including 2 bachelor, 6 one-bedroom, 9 two-bedroom and 9 three-bedroom apartments.
- ***The Haven:*** a 98-home community in the Barrhaven area of southwest Ottawa. This complex includes eight building blocks of apartments and townhouses, a community garden, a community room, as well as outdoor community space, and space for a children’s playground. It houses approximately 300 to 400 people. Unit sizes range from one to four bedrooms.
- ***Veterans’ House: the Andy Carswell Building:*** completed in early 2021 the ACB houses 40 veterans in a “housing first” supportive housing community on the *former* Rockcliffe Air Base. This one-of-a-kind community takes veterans off the streets of Ottawa or out of precarious housing, providing housing for them and care for *any* mental health, addiction and other problems they may have through partnerships with recognized experts.

Moving Forward

MHI has a record of successfully developing, building, and managing affordable housing communities to alleviate poverty. We are delivering on our mission and in doing so are becoming more widely recognized for our achievements.

During the last 20 years we have worked hard to house the homeless and recently MHI has developed two major business models — The Haven and Veterans' House. We will use the experience gained from these innovative projects and adapt our models as we move forward.

Currently we are working with Julian of Norwich Church and the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa to develop The Anchor, which will be an affordable housing community similar to The Haven in partnership with the church.

Also, in the late fall of 2020 MHI made the decision to go “national” with Veterans' House. We have now established a separate federally approved corporation, created a board, approved a set of by-laws, obtained charitable status, are setting a fundraising goal and are beginning to identify sites across the country.

Further, MHI expects to start construction during the first quarter of 2023, in partnership with the developer Dream, on the “Library parcel” of the LeBreton Flats redevelopment. This project will build 601 new residential rental units of which 31% will be accessible and 41% will be affordable housing (117 of the affordable units will be owned by Dream and 130 will be owned by MHI).

We are moving forward to help meet the increasing demand of homelessness in Ottawa and nationally.

Our Tenants

Housed in MHI's units are a cross-section of people in Ottawa who are badly in need of affordable housing: homeless people who are living in shelters and people who are at risk of homelessness, including young people returning to school, seniors on fixed incomes, people dependent on social assistance and disability payments, and individuals and families who are working poor. Our tenants might also be Indigenous, newcomers to Canada, LGBTQ, in recovery from addictions and street life, or have served time in prison. MHI has service agreements with the City of Ottawa governing 85 of our 139 units, tenants for which are selected through the Housing Registry for the City of Ottawa. We rent the remainder of our units privately to people from the general population who fit within our

mandate. We do this to ensure MHI communities are recognized as richly inclusive environments which welcome people from all walks of life. The MHI office maintains the wait-list of such applicants. Further, some units from this group are subsidized through income generated by our operations and donations.

Please note that, due to the special nature of the project, tenants for Veterans' House participate in a different selection process established with our project partners.

Because MHI provides housing for people who really ought to be housed in rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units where they would pay only 30% of their gross income for rent, we rely on some volunteer labour both to maintain our grass-roots nature and to help reduce property management costs and maintain lower rents. Nevertheless, without deep subsidies from government or large capital campaigns it would be impossible to provide all of our units at rent levels that meet RGI targets in all cases. Therefore, our goal is to offer a healthy mix of rent levels to meet the different needs in our community. About half of our units rent at RGI levels, or maximum shelter allowance for people on Ontario Works, or ODSP, another 35% of the units rent at what is referred to as BMR rates (70%-80% of below average market rent), and a total of approximately 15% rent at average market rates. In addition, our practice is to not raise the rent of households who are living in a 70% of market rental unit and who are paying more than 35% of their gross income for rent. Again, Veterans' House is a special case, aiming for 100% maximum shelter allowance rates.

Given the huge financial and human challenges involved, there is no question that the goals of MHI are complex and difficult to achieve. This makes it all the more rewarding when we see people settle into safe, well-maintained homes and get on with their lives without having to worry anymore about finding an adequate, affordable place to live. One of the perks of our work at MHI is that we are often able to witness tenants who are able to benefit from their time at MHI to improve their circumstances and ultimately move out into the private marketplace.

Organizational Structure

MHI is a "grass-roots", volunteer-led, highly collegial, and entrepreneurial organization. The Board of Directors establishes goals which flow from MHI's mission and values, develops a focused strategic plan to implement these goals and sets policies to guide the work of MHI. This plan is developed through consultation with committee members and reviewed on an annual basis. MHI committees then develop and implement these strategies either directly or indirectly through working teams. MHI currently has five full-time staff

members: Executive Director, Office Administrator, Manager of Communications and Marketing, Manager of Fund Development, and Manager of Community Engagement. MHI also employs LSM services to manage its properties and Dynapro to conduct its bookkeeping. Our office is located at 206-404 McArthur Avenue and our hours are 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. five days a week or by appointment.

The Executive Director is an *ex officio* member of each committee, acts in an advisory role to the committee chairs and oversees the work of MHI on behalf of the board to ensure that the committees are implementing the Strategic Plan and that there is overall coordination of the work of MHI. The ED also works with board members to develop the capacity of the committees to ensure that the responsibilities of each committee are met. The board selects, evaluates and supports the ED.

At present, MHI has eight standing committees: Executive Committee, Governance Committee, Finance Committee, Fundraising Committee, Communications and Marketing Committee, Development Committee, Property Committee, and Membership and Outreach Committee. The terms of reference for these committees are available. Decisions at the committee level are made by consensus — i.e. the majority in agreement and the remaining members able “to live with” the decision — and recorded in minutes.

MHI, which turned 20 this year, is still a relatively young organization and is continuously learning as we develop and grow. It is an exciting organization to be a part of for compassionate people who have a strong sense of social justice, who are team players and who enjoy creative thinking and experiential learning. Diversity of thinking is valued — indeed celebrated — as our greatest resource. We recognize that together we inspire each other to achieve more than we can imagine.

Financial Status

MHI’s most recent audited Statement and Annual General Report are available on the MHI website. In recent years they have confirmed MHI financial sustainability, which is critical to ensure that we will be able to continue to provide our tenants lower than market rates of housing in the years to come.

Responsibilities of Board Members

- **Please see Fiduciary Responsibilities Annex B (Page 11).** Board members have a dual role: they bring skill and experience to support the work of MHI and they encourage support for and involvement in the work of MHI by others, including their own faith community. They are expected to contribute approximately 6-10 hours of volunteer time per month. Some, particularly the executive, give more depending on their availability and interests. Board members are also expected to

be strongly committed to our Strategic Plan including our fundraising activities. We ask that they lead by example by including MHI in their charitable donations.

Board member expectations and responsibilities include the following:

- **Regularly attend board meetings and other MHI-related events:** The board meets the first Thursday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. except during the months of July, August, and December. In December the Executive Director hosts a Board and Staff Christmas Potluck. Spouses are always welcome, and everyone is encouraged to attend. MHI holds an Annual Retreat spending three to four hours planning and problem-solving. It sponsors a National Housing Day event usually on the third Sunday of November as well as an annual fundraising walk called the Tulipathon on the last Sunday in May. Our AGM is held towards the end of April — a very important meeting for board members. A schedule of board meetings and special events will be provided to you annually.
- **Participate actively and respectfully in board meetings:** Each board meeting begins with a reflection provided by one of the members in turn. The reflection is inspired by faith tradition or personal belief; and it often relates to our mission, grounded in a sense of shared responsibility toward people in need in our community.
- **Think and act strategically:** Over the past several years we have been working hard to evolve our governance framework from being more operationally focused to being more strategic and policy oriented. We have developed a policy on our fiduciary responsibilities (see Page 11 of this doc), while leaving the ED and staff the responsibilities of operational aspects of MHI. At our last retreat we took some time to review a discussion paper entitled “Who Is Responsible for What Between The Board and the ED”, which went into some depth about how we can improve planning, reporting and decision-making. This doc can be found in the minutes from the Annual Retreat meeting in the Private Page. One point that was underlined was that the role of the board is to set direction allowing the staff to execute our plans.
- **Stay informed about board and committee matters and prepare to add value.** Most material for board meetings is circulated well in advance. The agenda is prepared by the Executive Committee which meets the week before the board meeting. You should review these minutes and reports in advance of board meetings in order to add value through your comments and decisions (votes).
- **Become an active member of one of the eight standing committees:** Each standing committee normally meets once a month for about two hours, usually in

the first or second week of the month. Committees are the heart and soul of MHI. Chairpersons receive copies of board minutes and are invited to participate in the board retreats. Committees may or may not be chaired by a board member. However, one board member is always designated as the communication link between the board and the committee.

- **Approve and monitor the budget:** MHI's fiscal year is November 1 to October 31. Currently our operating budget is approximately \$2,000,000 per year. Our books are kept according to generally accepted accounting principles and audited annually as required in Canada for charities such as ours.
- **Volunteer for and willingly accept assignments and complete them thoroughly and on time.** MHI members are highly committed to growth. Accomplishment of MHI's Strategic Plan depends upon board members, staff and volunteers alike. As a board member your colleagues have confidence in you and expect that you will keep your commitments to the best of your ability.
- **If relevant, cultivate the support of the faith community to which you belong:** As a coalition of faith communities and faith-based organizations from across the city, MHI depends upon the active support of its members both financially and as volunteers. In November (usually the third Sunday), MHI holds an awareness-raising event to mark National Housing Day. This includes both an interfaith prayer service and a reception, and provides board members and others an accessible opportunity to introduce new people to the work of MHI and to solicit their support.
- **Participate in fundraising for the organization.** Fundraising is essential to realizing our mission. Acquisition of property/property development for housing is capital intensive, whereas the revenues from our tenancies cannot cover all of our costs. Every board member should be prepared to participate in some aspect of fundraising whether it be an actual "ask" for money, or helping with associated administrative activities or simply taking the time to thank those who have made a significant donation.

Presently, there are two aspects to our ongoing fundraising activity. In late fall or early in the new year, we mail out a request to faith communities and faith-based organizations asking them to join MHI and if possible make an additional donation. Secondly, on the first Sunday of May we hold our "Tulipathon", a walk to raise money and awareness. This is a good opportunity for MHI members to talk about MHI to people they know, possibly involve them in the activities of the organization and also solicit financial support.

- **Ensure compliance with all legislative and statutory duties and obligations:** Many different pieces of legislation and statutory duties apply to MHI with regard to our being incorporated as a non-profit and a charity, to our being an employer, and to our being a provider of affordable rental housing for people who are disadvantaged in our society.
- **Abide by the terms and conditions in contractual arrangements and funding agreements (see previous item):** MHI has benefitted from receiving significant amounts of money through organizations such as the City of Ottawa, the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and other granting agencies, and hopes to continue to do so. These benefits come with regular reporting requirements, for example related to MHI-contracted financial responsibilities for construction, maintenance, and repairs. Although many of these contractual obligations are delivered by companies that work directly for us, eg Dynapro which provides accounting services and who also files statements for CRA, or LSM which provides services to ensure maintenance and repairs are made to our buildings. Certain committees are also involved.
- **In all matters, work for the good of Multifaith Housing Initiative:** Board members, staff, committee members and other volunteers have authority to act on behalf of MHI only if they have been given authority by the board as a whole. The board remains responsible for the impact of such actions. A board member also has an obligation to declare a conflict of interest in situations where the member might benefit directly or indirectly from a decision taken by the board because of a relationship with another organization such as a competing non-profit/charitable organization, a significant fund provider or a supplier. For more information on the responsibilities of board members see Annex B, page 11 of this document, which addresses the fiduciary responsibilities of the board and individual board members.
- **Make your best effort to complete the term of office to which you are elected:** Board members are elected for a two-year period. This can be renewed twice for a total of six years. Our hope is that board members will seek to contribute a legacy to the organization and set a high bar for others to follow.

2022 revision to our Strategic Plan

MHI has a responsibility to manage its assets well and to provide housing which is well-maintained and safe. This is held in sensitive balance with its responsibility to provide housing which is also affordable for people whose income cannot sustain the costs incurred. In order to increase our sustainability in meeting both of these responsibilities, MHI has established the following strategic objectives with supporting initiatives:

Strategic Objective A: Mobilize and expand our community reach through a multifaith and inclusive civic lens.

Initiatives:

1. Engage faith and other communities in programming that captures the imagination and passion of its members.
2. Increase the interactions between and among different faith and other communities.
3. Identify, share and promote best practices within faith and other communities.
4. Identify and engage champions in faith groups and other communities.
5. Research and leverage existing structures in faith groups and other communities.

Strategic Objective B: Ensure our long-term sustainability.

Initiatives:

1. Manage the funding, construction, and operationalization of new projects in order to meet the growing need to adequately house the homeless and the precariously housed in our community.
2. Research and develop competitive staff salaries and benefits packages.
3. Develop and implement a long-range funding plan to support subsidies that MHI extends to its existing tenants.
4. Investigate and implement approaches to the recruitment of and support to volunteers and acknowledgement of their contributions.
5. Ensure that the capital expenditure revenue account is adequately funded to meet building maintenance and improvement needs.
6. Strengthen and equip MHI leadership.
7. Enhance our fundraising model, processes, and successes.
8. Promote practices that enhance the engagement of tenants and support their residency.

MHI has recently developed a new Corporate Plan and reporting mechanism.

Orientation

When a new board member is elected, a returning board member will act as a mentor and provide further orientation to the work of MHI in general and provide background to the particular issues being dealt with at the time of his/her election.

All board members are covered by Directors and Officers Liability Insurance and all board members and volunteers are also insured against any injury incurred as a result of participating in any MHI activity including travel to and from that activity.



**Agreement to allow my name to stand for election
to the Board of Directors at the next
Annual General Meeting.
February 2023**

Attention: Bill Austin, Chair, Governance Committee

I have read and understood the MHI Board Briefing Booklet describing the role and responsibilities of an MHI board member and would be pleased to accept the nomination of the board for this position.

Please find attached a summary of my CV.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone number: _____

Birth date: _____

(Required by Industry Canada)

Signature: _____ (Nominee)

Signature: _____ (Chair of Governance Committee)

Date: _____

Annex B

Fiduciary Responsibilities of the MHI Board and Directors

(Sept 15, 2020)

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FIDUCIARY DUTIES OF THE MHI BOARD and DIRECTORS

As a director and as a board we are fiduciaries of MHI.

There is a long-standing common law principle which governs all aspects of our relationship to the corporation and is codified in the corporate statutes by the requirement that directors act honestly and in good faith with a view to the best interests of the corporation in exercising our powers and discharging our duties.

Our fiduciary duties are perhaps one of the most fundamental responsibilities we have as directors on our board.

Each individual director on the board has a fiduciary duty to the organization, which is comprised of three main duties:

a. Duty of care — to act with the competence and diligence that a reasonably prudent person with similar knowledge and expertise would exercise in comparable circumstances.

b. Duty of loyalty — to act honestly and in good faith in the best interests of the organization (eg. Patrons, members, donors, volunteers, staff).

c. Duty of obedience — means that we as the Board of Directors must make sure that MHI is abiding by all applicable laws and regulations and doesn't engage in illegal or unauthorized activities. The duty of obedience also means that we as the Board of Directors must carry out MHI's mission in accordance with the purpose it stated in getting qualified as a not-for-profit organization.

In this context, it is important to recognize that a director's role is as a member of the board but their responsibility is as an individual. A director cannot delegate these responsibilities.

We can best meet these responsibilities as a member and as a group by:

- Ensuring we are familiar with MHI's Mission, Vision, Values, Policies, Plans (strategic and operational) and the role of various committees,
- Ensuring our work on committees is integrated and focused and aligned with the above,
- Ensuring we contribute to the preparation of our Strategic Plan and work toward its objectives and goals,
- Ensuring minutes and reports are submitted in a timely fashion,

- **Contributing our diverse experience and talents by attending and participating at board meetings,**
- **Advocating and increasing awareness of MHI,**
- **Supporting MHI financially and in fundraising as you consider appropriate, and**
- **Working collaboratively with other board members, volunteers and staff.**