



MULTIFAITH HOUSING INITIATIVE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' BRIEFING BOOKLET

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

MHI is a faith-based charitable organization whose goal is to participate in the solution to the affordable housing crisis and to mobilize faith communities and others in our work to address it. MHI affirms the values and a statement contained in the Charter for Compassion, and 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, Sheikh, and Unitarian backgrounds. Our membership is comprised of over 70 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.

As a charity, MHI is working hard toward building a culture of philanthropy into our organization, and throughout our membership. MHI successfully had our first capital campaign, "A Place to Call Home" from March 2013- Dec 2014 in which we successfully raised \$500K. In March 2016 we officially launched the sequel to "A Place To Call Home", called "The Haven: A Symbol of Solidarity and Determination." The goal of this campaign is an additional funds to offset the development costs of our project in Barrhaven called "The Haven." When added to our initial \$500K, the total fundraised amount of \$1.25M allowed MHI to build 18 units more than what the government funding allowed, and also offer 40% of the units at deeper core need subsidy levels. MHI will soon be embarking on an even larger capital campaign for our project called Veterans House, with a goal of several million dollars. Therefore, fundraising is an important element of our growth and success.

MHI provides affordable housing for households whose income falls below the low income cut-off (LICO), which ranges from \$23,298 for one person to \$61,656 for 7 or more in a household. Over the past 10 years we have learned that that the actual provision of housing through grass-roots action is a very effective strategy to raise awareness about the lack of affordable housing and to convince 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 do something about social problems that they encounter when they see the human cost that these problems generate.

MHI now owns and manages 139 affordable housing units in 4 different neighbourhood areas:

- ***Kent House:*** an older building in downtown Ottawa with 2 bachelors 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 bachelors, 6 one-bedrooms, 9 two-bedrooms and 9 three-bedrooms.
- ***The Haven:*** MHI is currently completing construction on a 98 home community in the Barrhaven area of west Ottawa. This complex includes 8 building blocks of apartments and townhouses, a community garden, a community room, as well as outdoor community space, and a toddler's playground. It houses approx 350 people once full occupancy has been established.

Current Projects:

- ***Veterans House:*** MHI is in the pre-construction phase of a 40 unit "housing first" supportive housing community specifically for homeless Veterans. This project involves multiple partnerships.

Housed in these 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 for homelessness: young people returning to school, seniors on fixed income, people dependent on social assistance and disability payments, individuals and families who are working poor. Our tenants might also be aboriginal or newcomers to Canada; gay or transgendered; in recovery from addictions and street life; or have served time in prison. MHI has service agreements with the City of Ottawa governing twenty-one of our 41 units and tenants for these units are selected through the Housing Registry for the City of Ottawa. 64 of the 98 units at the Haven will be managed through this same list at the Housing Registry. However, the tenants for the Veterans House project will participate in a

different selection process established with our project partners. We rent the remainder of our units privately to people from the general population who fit within our mandate. A list of interested applicants is kept in the office. Units for this group are subsidized through income generated by our operations and donations.

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 use 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 is impossible to provide all of our units at rent levels that meet RGI targets in all cases. Therefore, our goal is to maintain a healthy mix of our rental units to meet the different needs in our community. About half of our units will rent at RGI levels, or maximum shelter allowance for people on Ontario Works, or ODSP, another 35% of the units will rent at what is referred to as BMR rates (70% - 80% of average market rent), and a total of approximately 15% are at average market rental rates. In addition, we have a practice of not raising 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.

Despite our best efforts to provide lower rents, many of our tenants are struggling with a variety of issues associated with poverty and can still be at risk of losing their housing. For this reason, MHI offers each tenant household the support of a trained volunteer who is able to provide mentoring and support on an as needed basis.

There is no question, given the huge challenges both financial and human, that the goals of MHI are complex and difficult to achieve. Equally however, it is very rewarding to see people able to settle into safe, well -maintained homes and get on with their lives without worrying about the need to find an adequate, affordable place to live. One of the perks of our work at MHI is that we often get to see tenants who are able to use their time at MHI to improve their circumstances and ultimately move out into the private market place.

Organizational Structure

MHI is a grass-roots, volunteer led, highly collegial and entrepreneurial organization. The Board of Directors establishes goals in light of MHI's mission and values, develops a focused strategic plan to implement these 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 3.5 staff members: a full-time Executive Director, a part-time office administrator, a three quarter time Manager of Fund Development, and a part-time Manager of Volunteers. MHI also employs LSM services to manage its properties and Dynapro to handle the book keeping. Our office is located at 206-

404 McArthur Avenue and our hours are 9 a.m. to 1 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 co-ordination 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 being met. The board selects, evaluates and supports the ED. MHI also employs tenants to do superintendent/custodial work where feasible.

At present, MHI has nine standing committees: Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Fund Raising Committee, Communications Committee, Resident Relations Committee, Development Committee, Human Resources Committee, Housing Management Committee, and Membership and Outreach Committee. A Nominations Committee is constituted each year in December. The terms of reference for these committees are available. Decisions are made by consensus –i.e. the majority in agreement and the remaining members able ‘to live with’ the decision --and recorded in the minutes.

MHI, which will turn 15 this year, is still a relatively young organization and is still learning as we develop and grow. Nevertheless MHI is an exciting organization to be 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 as we recognise that together as people of faith we are inspired by what is more than any of us can describe or imagine.

Financial Status

MHI’s most recent audited Statement and Annual General Report are available on the MHI website.

Responsibilities of Board Members

MHI 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 when relevant. They are expected to contribute approximately 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 givings and making a donation to MHI which is significant relative to their own personal circumstances.

Board member responsibilities include the following:

- **Regularly attend board meetings and other MHI related events:** The board meets the last Thursday of the month from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. except during the month of July. MHI holds up to two retreats per year on a Sunday afternoon. It sponsors a National Housing Day event usually on the third Sunday of November and its annual fund raising walk, the Tulipathon, on the first Sunday in May.
- **Participate actively and respectfully in board meetings:** Each board meeting begins with a reflection provided by one of the members in turn. This is based on the insights his or her faith tradition has to offer regarding our mission and grounds us in a sense of shared responsibility for responding to people in need in our community.
- **Stay informed about Board and committee matters by reviewing the minutes and reports provided and prepare yourself well for Board meetings to make comments and decisions.** Most material for Board meetings is circulated well in advance. The agenda is prepared by the executive committee (EC) which meets the Thursday before the Board meeting
- **Become an active member of one of the five Standing Committees:** Each standing committee normally meets once a month for about 2 hours, usually in the first or second week. Committees are the heart and soul of MHI. Committee members who are not board members are encouraged to be familiar with all the activities 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 \$500,000 per year. Our books are kept according to generally accepted accounting principles and audited annually as required by Industry Canada.
- **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 having the confidence that people will keep their commitments to the best of their ability.

- **If relevant, cultivate the support of the faith community to which you belong:** As a coalition of faith communities and others 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 and in addition, 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. 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 to solicit financial support.

In March of 2013 we launched a 2-year major capital campaign “*A Place to Call Home*” with the goal of raising \$500,000. We have achieved approximately 90% of our goal. MHI is in the process of developing Phase 2 of this campaign, to raise an additional \$1,000,000 to fund its upcoming development of 98 units of affordable housing in Barrhaven.

- **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 providing 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 granting agencies such as United Way, Trillium and other granting agencies as well as the City of Ottawa and hopes to continue to do so.

These benefits come with regular reporting requirements. MHI has also contracted significant amounts of money for construction and repairs.

- **In all matters, work for the good of Multifaith Housing Initiative:** Board members, staff, committees and volunteers have authority to take action on behalf of MHI only if they have been given this 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 or where he or she has made a commitment to a competing non profit and/or charitable organization.
- **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 lasting legacy to the organization and set a high bar for others to follow by renewing their terms and thereby gaining the experience needed to provide strong leadership.

Strategic Plan 2018 to 2023

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

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 and other communities
5. Research and leverage existing structures in faith and other communities

Strategic Objective B: Ensure our long-term sustainability

Initiatives:

1. Manage the funding, construction, and operationalization of new projects
2. Research and develop competitive staff salary 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.

In 2018 MHI will be working with our committees and focusing on creating a Operational Plan to support the strategic plan.

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.

January 2017



MULTIFAITH HOUSING INITIATIVE

**Agreement to allow my name to stand for election
to the Board of Directors at the next
Annual General Meeting
March 18, 2018 at 2:30 p.m.**

Attention: Mike Ward, Chair, Nominating 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 nominating committee for this position.

Please find attached a brief synopsis of my CV.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone number: _____

Birth date: _____

(required by Industry Canada)

Signature: _____ (Nominee)

Signature: _____ (Chair of Nominating Committee)

Date: _____