Lighthouse Mission Homeless Shelter

667 & 669 Main Street
Winnipeg

Preliminary Report
January 20, 2008

Background

The Lighthouse Mission is considering the redevelopment of the present 3-story building located at 669 Main Street, as well as turning the adjacent 3-story building to the south into an extended-stay shelter facility.

- Both buildings were constructed around 1900 and have brick exteriors with stone foundations and wood floor and roof systems. The building to the south is slightly wider and shorter front-to-back than the present facility. (see Appendix)
- The main floor of 669 Main is presently being used for a soup-kitchen style dining hall and multi-purpose room with a small kitchen/ storage area at the rear of the building. The second floor houses 2 administration offices, but is otherwise unused. The third floor is unoccupied.
- The building to the south has been unoccupied for approximately 20 years and is in poor condition with debris throughout. Wooden interior partitions and combustible finishes would have to be demolished as well as all existing wiring and plumbing.
- Each building has a wooden stair at the back (east) end of the building. The stairs would require upgrading as well as separation from the floor areas at each level (for fire-ratings and security purposes).
- The present facility has a firewall on the north side, with exits on the main and second floors through to a steel stair shared with the Catherine Booth building. Unfortunately, the stair doesn't extend to the third level of the Lighthouse building.
- *An additional stair/ exit may be required for the south building and extension to the existing steel stair may have to be considered.*
- Asbestos-containing pipe insulation was visible in the basement of 667 as well as bird droppings on upper floors. Abatement and decontamination of the spaces should be done prior to any investigation or demolition work commences.

The Goal

- To build a short-term and extended stay facility that will provide a secure, yet user-friendly environment
- To create an uplifting, non-threatening space that can establish structure for the patrons and a sense of home
- To house outreach, ministry, and educational programs
- To provide space for administration services
- To have a fully operational kitchen and dining area

The Challenge

The Building

Renovating a heritage building can be a very complicated and costly venture. There are many items to consider, particularly with a multi-use facility:

- The condition of the existing structure and services must be surveyed by professional engineers and may require extensive upgrading.
- The physical limitations of the structure can pose challenges in terms of providing adequate fire-exiting and access for disabled patrons. (EG: stair locations, no elevator, corridor widths, etc.)
- Hazardous materials such as asbestos must be abated before any work, including survey work, should commence.
- Adequate ventilation system design is mandatory in shelter facilities to prevent the spread of diseases, such as TB. The equipment and ductwork required to properly exhaust and maintain fresh air in the building can be costly and expensive to operate.
- Fire alarm, emergency lighting, and sprinkler systems must be incorporated into the new design.

- Fire separations between floors and within floor areas and exits will be part of the upgrade.
- A commercial kitchen with gas-fired appliances requires costly exhaust and fire-suppression equipment as well as compliance with all Health Department standards for design and materials. Storage and delivery of food should be considered. Combining with adjacent facility would be desirable.

The Program

Housing the homeless has specific, often conflicting, design requirements including:

- Privacy
  The balance between security and privacy is a delicate one and will vary depending on the nature of the patron's stay at the facility. Men and women will be housed on separate floors; combining private quarters with mixed use areas.
- Security:
  Systems could include surveillance cameras, metal detectors, panic alarms, security officers, and card access systems. Staffing considerations must be made for any in-house monitoring or gate-keeping.
- The interior design should create a calm, non-overpowering environment for patrons, many of whom have problems with substance abuse or mental illness. Materials and fixtures must be durable and low-maintenance, yet non-institutional in appearance.
- Determine the visibility of the facility. IE: does the street-front offer a welcoming entrance or do the patrons enter through a security vestibule at the rear of the building? Will there be signage on Main street, or is a low-profile desired?
- Consider space for chapel, private consultation, confessional
- Consider community outreach programs and educational services - classrooms, fitness room, art space
- Consider space for a clinic - nutrition counseling, emergency situations
- Private lockers for overnight visitors
- Provision for Caretaking - staffing, housekeeping rooms, equipment and supply storage
- Telephone and internet access
- Washroom facilities to be private or communal - showers?
- Loading area at rear of building to be upgraded to allow delivery/ drop-off

Preliminary Space Planning:

Major Design Considerations

- Define the type of shelter in terms of floor usage and the number of patrons. This will be required in order to establish the building code classification and the occupant load per floor. Requirements for such things as exits and washroom facilities are dependent on this information. Will there be family quarters? Will there be assembly areas such as classrooms or a chapel? Ultimately the building will be defined by its use and occupancy for building code analysis.
- Accessibility for physically challenged patrons is an issue as the buildings presently do not have an elevator. Sleeping quarters on floors above ground would be restrictive. Washrooms would require additional space and special accessible fixtures.
- A commercial kitchen has many inherent restrictions and code requirements. Kitchens need areas for food storage, garbage, dishes, and equipment, and require dedicated exhaust, electrical, and plumbing services. The needs must be defined as closely as possible in terms of the number of patrons served and frequency of use. How many meals per day will be prepared on site? Will hot meals be served? Is the kitchen shared between the two buildings? Do extended stay visitors eat separately? Do men and women patrons dine separately?

- Define the use and locations of communal areas such as lounges, meeting rooms, quiet rooms, etc. Security issues must be balanced with occupants' freedom to move within the facility.

The following options are suggested layouts meant for discussion purposes only. (see Appendix for floor plans)

Option A

South Building

Third Floor

- Women's long-term quarters with private rooms, communal lounge, and shared washroom and shower facilities. Rooms may require beds for babies or children.

Second Floor

- Men's long-term quarters with private rooms, communal lounge, and shared washroom and shower facilities.

Main Floor

- Dining hall and Kitchen, Storage, Washroom Facilities

North Building (Existing Lighthouse Mission)

Third Floor

- Administration, Chapel, Classroom, and Counseling spaces

Second Floor

- Short-term semi-private sleeping area and shared washrooms

Main Floor

- Dining hall and Kitchen

Option B

South Building

Third Floor

- Men's long-term quarters with private rooms, communal lounge, and shared washroom and shower facilities.

Second Floor

- Men's short-term quarters with open sleeping area, communal lounge, and shared washroom facilities.

Main Floor

- Dining hall and Kitchen, Storage, Washroom Facilities (semi-public)

North Building (Existing Lighthouse Mission)

Third Floor

- Women's long-term quarters with private rooms, communal lounge, and shared washroom and shower facilities.

Second Floor

- Administration, Chapel, Classroom, and Counseling spaces

Main Floor

- Dining hall and Kitchen (public)

Where to begin?

The use and occupancy of the facility must be determined in order to proceed with building code analysis, which will determine the level of upgrading required and ultimately the budget costs for the project. General spatial separations should be considered in terms of security and function. Once the parameters have been set for the general usage of the various floors, design floor plans can be generated and options discussed.

The buildings should be cleaned and hazardous materials removed prior to further investigation by professional engineers. Structural analysis will determine the floor loading capabilities and may have layout and usage implications. It can be assumed that the existing plumbing and electrical systems will be replaced, so a survey of these systems is less important at this time.

An Architect will prepare a building code analysis that will dictate the requirements for exiting from floor areas, types of materials allowable, washroom requirements, fire separations, etc. Further development of the preliminary floor plans can be made and an outline specification written to describe the various components of the renovation. Preliminary costing can begin based on this information.

Government funding agencies should be contacted as early as possible in order to benefit from their expertise and to gain direction for funding application. Again, a clearly defined project will be more attractive to investors.

Volunteers and donations will be a huge benefit to the project and organization of these can commence once assurance of funding is met.