

GOOD WORK NEWS

The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

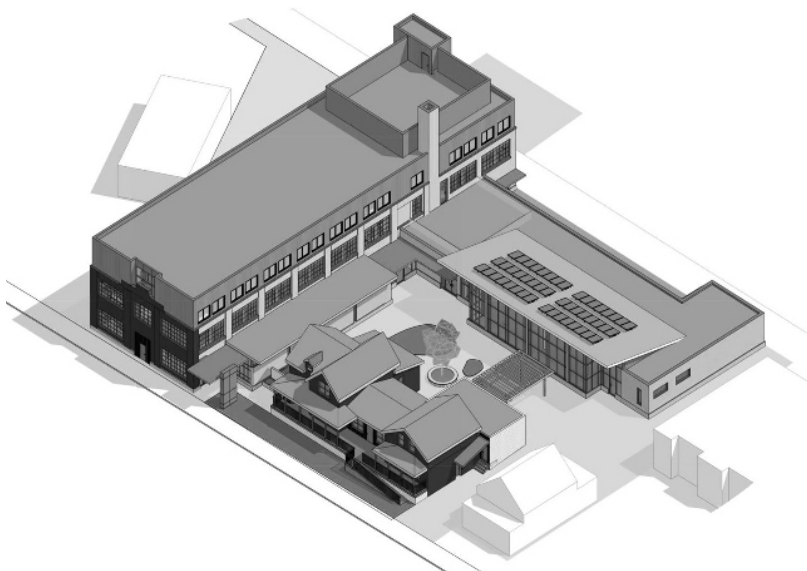
Issue 149

June 2022

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

Inside This Issue:

- Making Home at St. John's Kitchen
- A New Vision for 97 Victoria
- What We Have Learned About Housing at UA
- Reflections on Working at St. Andrew's Shelter
- A Salute with Gratitude to the "Book Man" Roman Dubinski
- Remembering Sally Lerner



Making Home at St. John's Kitchen

By Joe Mancini

By the winter of 2019, it was increasingly clear that growing homelessness was an overwhelming issue at St. John's Kitchen. You could see it in the number of people sleeping on the floor of the Kitchen, desperate for simple places to lie down and get some rest. At the same time drug use in the washrooms was creating a new kind of chaos. Those without housing respond to dislocation by using increasingly powerful drugs.

It was at this time that David Gibson from Perimeter Development offered to bring together his longtime friend and architect, Joe Bogdan to help The Working Centre look closely at properties we owned or to consider other properties that could be used to build supportive housing. It was decided that the best option was to redesign the 97 Victoria N campus by rebuilding St. John's Kitchen and adding 38 units of housing focused on those dealing with homelessness.

Throughout the pandemic, The Working Centre has worked closely with David Gibson and Craig Beattie from Perimeter Development and Joe Bogdan and Eli Newman from BNKC Architects to visualize and develop full plans for the 97 Victoria North campus.

This work may not have progressed except for Perimeter Development's commitment to cover and support this pre-planning process. Their generous offer has given The Working Centre the amazing gift of having access to the best of

For almost 20 years The Working Centre has built up the 97 Victoria N property where we have created a social economy that includes St. John's Kitchen where 250 people a day are served meals, and access to medical supports, laundry, showers, and washrooms.

Kitchener's property development knowledge. It has enabled steady, developmental planning to move forward the many pieces of this relatively complicated project.

The design that we are presenting is the result of 2 years of background work. We are now moving towards site plan and building permit documents. We only have to look out the front window of St. John's Kitchen to see the encampment of 50 tents at 100 Victoria to know how important it is to create long term housing.

For almost 20 years The Working Centre has built up the 97 Victoria N property where we have created a social economy that includes St. John's Kitchen where 250 people a day are served meals, and access to medical supports, laundry, showers, and washrooms. Throughout the pandemic we have utilized the garage to distribute a further 200 takeout meals plus pantry goods from the Foodbank of Waterloo Region. Worth A Second Look Furniture and Housewares has consistently

continued on page 2

A New Vision for 97 Victoria North

The Working Centre is excited to announce plans to renovate and re-envision our 97 Victoria Street North campus location

- 38 units of supportive housing
- A new ground level St. John's Kitchen

Perimeter Development Donates One Million Dollars to the Capital Campaign

Announcing Our Making Home Fundraising Campaign

Read the project details on pages 4,5, and 8.



Visual of the new St. John's Kitchen and community courtyard



Support our Making Home fundraising campaign and help us build safe and affordable housing in our community

www.97victoria.theworkingcentre.org

Thirty Eighth Year

Issue 149

June 2022

Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 13,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

Editors: Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini

Contributors: Jay Straus, Zachary Schuetzkowski, JP Smola, Sandy Keller, Douglas MacLellan, Christina Mancini, Hilary Abel, Rob Davis, Martin Edmonds, Elie Newman, Thilani Rajarathna, Boian Dabov

Editorial comments, changes of address and new subscriptions should be directed to:

The Working Centre

58 Queen St. S., Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 1V6

Phone: (519) 743-1151 • Fax: (519) 743-3840

E-mail: kara@theworkingcentre.org

Web: www.theworkingcentre.org

Canada Post Bulk #05306256

Charitable Registration #13092 9607 RR0001

Making Home at St. John's Kitchen

continued from page 1

recycled and sold between 1500 - 2000 items per week. Since 2009, Hospitality House has provided 6 beds for homeless individuals with acute illness. The Community Dental Clinic is an important resource operating out of 82 Victoria N and before the pandemic provided excellent dental support to

the homeless community.

The importance of this project cannot be overstated. In October 2021, a memorial service at St. John's Kitchen remembered 76 people who had recently died, the vast majority from overdoses of widely available synthetic opioid drugs. Addressing homelessness means creating new housing and this project is designed to do exactly that.

Thank You to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church



This winter, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church opened their doors in the middle of the social crisis of growing homelessness and offered their space to shelter 60 people per night. We are thankful for this partnership that provided housing to the most marginalized in

our society. The Gospel teaches us to accept the least among us, and this winter St. Andrew's has responded to this core tenant of Christianity with so much grace, love and openness.

St. Andrew's Shelter has been a refuge this winter. Shelter residents have been grateful for the respite and have truly appreciated the gift of the space. Even in the Spring the space fills each night with up to 60 people. The Church has walked with us through the emotional traumas of overdoses, people living outside in the cold of winter, and the very real psychoses that come with the combination of drug use and mental health issues. With all of that, St. Andrew's has been a place of acceptance, warmth and hospitality.

Introducing the Edith MacIntosh Shelter

As St. Andrew's moves into their summer youth programming, we are working to return their space to its original purpose. The Church community will send us on our way with a shared barbecue and a commitment to continue working on the issues of affordable, supportive housing in our community.

The Region of Waterloo and The Working Center have made plans to transfer the St. Andrew's Shelter into the former Edith MacIntosh Daycare on Stirling Ave. We will be able to continue offering approximately the same number of shelter beds throughout the summer. This new shelter is part of a commitment from the Region and The Working Centre to continue to provide shelter options during this time of high homelessness.

Encampment at 100 Victoria North

The encampment across the street from St. John's Kitchen is a stark example of how it has become important to continue providing shelter spaces throughout the summer. The pressure of homelessness seemed to land on to this site as soon as the snow cleared, and people quickly gathered, having so few other options. The benefit of the site is that St. John's Kitchen is across the street and provides meals, showers, washrooms and laundry.

In mid-May, the Region agreed to provide security so that the washrooms at St. John's Kitchen could be opened during off hours including weekends. The Working Centre is presently operating 3 different night shifts and was too stretched to offer a fourth. We have learned together with the security company as they provide this important community service.



Computer Recycling is a local project making technology accessible by selling affordable refurbished computers and components.

We promote and educate our community about Open Source software. Our computers come with the Xubuntu operating system, Libre Office, and other open source and free software.

By enabling the reuse of electronic items we help protect the environment and work toward a sustainable future.

Come shop for used computers and parts. Learn about free software and meeting your computer needs in an affordable and sustainable manner.

We gratefully accept your used electronics and batteries. Items can be dropped off during our open hours or by appointment. We refurbish and sell the usable items. Other items are recycled in an environmentally friendly manner.

We are currently open by appointment.



Starting in August we will be open:

Tuesday mornings: 10am - 12pm

Wednesday afternoons: 1pm - 4pm

Please use the entrance on Charles St. around the corner from 66 Queen St. South.

Contact Us

cr@theworkingcentre.org | 519-743-1151 ext. 225
website: computerrecycling.theworkingcentre.org



What We Have Learned About Housing at UA

By Jay Straus

Since October of 2020, the dormitory at 139 University Ave W in Waterloo, commonly known as UA, has been turned into “interim” or “transitional” housing.

When first looking at this idea, which we believe to be a unique enterprise, focus was on the labels of interim or transitional. The housing side was through the lens of a roof and a door, the physical aspects.

What we have learned since we started is that the emphasis needs to be on the word housing. Housing, not of the physical space, but more in line with what we would think of as Home. We came into this project with the idea of helping to stabilize individuals and move them along to permanent housing. We now realize that for many of the individuals at UA, this could and needs to be a long game. For people struggling with their mental health, substance use disorders and trauma, making UA their home means they can find success in being able to continue to live indoors.

For many at UA, if there was a bounty of affordable housing, having them move to these locations would in many cases lead to inevitable failure. This is a different vision of housing first, where people are supported in individual units. The truth is that most property owners would not be able to deal with the behaviors and struggles of the chronically homeless. The “middle-class” image of what housing looks like does not need to be the goal for everyone.

In the early days of the pandemic, the Region of Waterloo and The Working Centre realized that we needed to find creative ideas to help the chronically unhoused find a place. The Hammer Building owned by WCRI, was selected as a location. In September of 2020,



I was hired to help lead a team of people to host and house 80 of the hardest to house individuals in our region. We started by hiring 27 individuals, most of whom had no experience with this community. A very diverse group of people with the common goal of wanting to be a part of something meaningful. The team included engineers, New Canadians, professionals, students and many other different backgrounds. Some had lived experience, some in recovery, some having been homeless themselves. What we did find as a commonality was a desire to be a part of something bigger. For some of us, this population and their struggles

were brand new. It was a challenge for many of the people working at UA to find the grace necessary to work in this environment. There were many comments made about “these people need to change”. One individual in particular has been with us since we started, and this type of comment was common to hear from them. About a year into the program, they shared with the team, “when I started I used to say that these people needed to change, it turned out that I was the one that needed to change”. I have to admit hearing them say that did bring some tears of joy.

Tears are not a stranger to UA. We have experienced tremendous highs and lows since we began. We have seen great loss. Five suspected

Reflections on Working at St. Andrew's Shelter

By Zachary Schuetzkowski

When people ask me if I enjoy my work, I feel somewhat guilty when I answer that I don't. I have to bear witness to the torments and cruelties that our world inflicts. I'm incredibly fortunate to be spared from the viciousness of poverty, but I feel the anxiety of the human condition when I come to work. I've seen people almost die, hurt themselves or other people, weep in sorrow for the memory of those they loved, experience psychosis, and all the other evils that come with the existential threat of housing insecurity.

In these circumstances it is a deep question to ask whether I enjoy my work. I know that I enjoy things like a good cup of coffee or a good book. However, the stresses in this environment, watching what the homeless go through each night, is on a different level, it is nothing



1085 people experiencing any type of homelessness in Waterloo Region were counted on September 21, 2021

412 people living rough - living in encampments, on the street, or staying in their vehicle

335 people experiencing hidden homelessness

191 people in Emergency Shelter

84 people in transitional housing

63 people in institutions such as hospitals, police custody, Women's Crisis Services

close to anything I have experienced and its tragedies constantly stay with me.

While each night, I witness the realities of poverty, homelessness, mental health decline and synthetic drug addiction, it is hard to fathom how this reality is almost fully hidden from society. Yet by virtue of doing this work, by standing in solidarity, the St. Andrew's Shelter brings this reality of poverty into the light. I have a personal connection to Iona Hall, the St. Andrew's church space that we are using for the shelter each night. It was in Iona Hall where I spent many years of my childhood with Scouts Canada. I have a lot of good memories that seem antithetical to memories of the space I have now. I am proud that Iona Hall has been converted

into a space that cares and supports those most left out of society.

In this environment of anxiety, I have also seen that something beautiful often emerges. I've met some truly amazing people that I never would have thought I could have met. Every day brings something surprising that makes me smile. I get to be around some people that carve a piece of hope in this world as they struggle against the odds. Every person who comes through the doors has something to contribute to the project of humanity and I never can predict what will come through next. I have seen how these contributions are in essence ignored, how they are shut out of housing because of a system that prioritizes profitability.

Human rights don't seem to be taken seriously by our governments, despite the legal commitments to them that have been made over the years. In my view, these rights are based upon a claim to a minimally good life that every human being deserves by virtue of being human and the dignity that it entails. This is why it's unacceptable to tolerate injustices like discrimination, lack of access to education, and contaminated drinking water. If any human being is to be worthy of dignity, it must be because all of humanity is worthy of dignity.

However, this dignity seems to be minimally acknowledged when it comes to our work. I get the impression that government support for this work is not so much because it's the right thing to do, but because they want to hide this unpleasant reality in order to attract capital investment. We can spend billions on recreation and leisure, but when it comes to the basic need for shelter there's all this talk of fiscal responsibility and proper use of funds. An extra million dollars to advertise the Rolling Stones' stage equipment? No problem, here you go! I just wish this enthusiasm



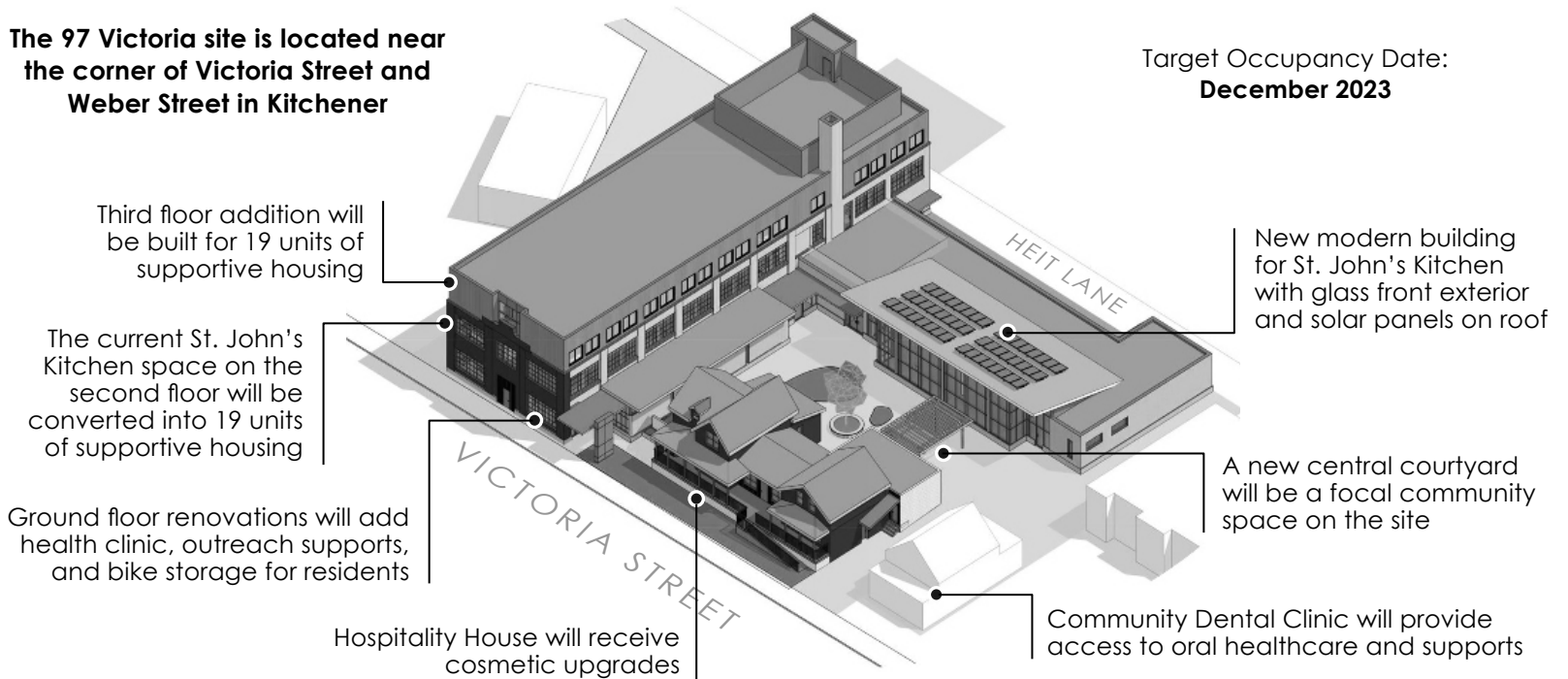
extended to something more important to our survival, like shelter from the elements.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm amazed at what is being done or how it's even possible. How much effort goes into this project tells me that I'm a part of something that's good beyond my ability to understand or appreciate in its totality. It's not something I enjoy, but it's something that I'm glad to be part of.

A New Vision for NinetySeven Victoria

The 97 Victoria site is located near the corner of Victoria Street and Weber Street in Kitchener

Target Occupancy Date: **December 2023**



Exterior view from Victoria Street

A Housing First Approach

Housing acts as a foundation. When people have a home, they can live their lives more fully in community.

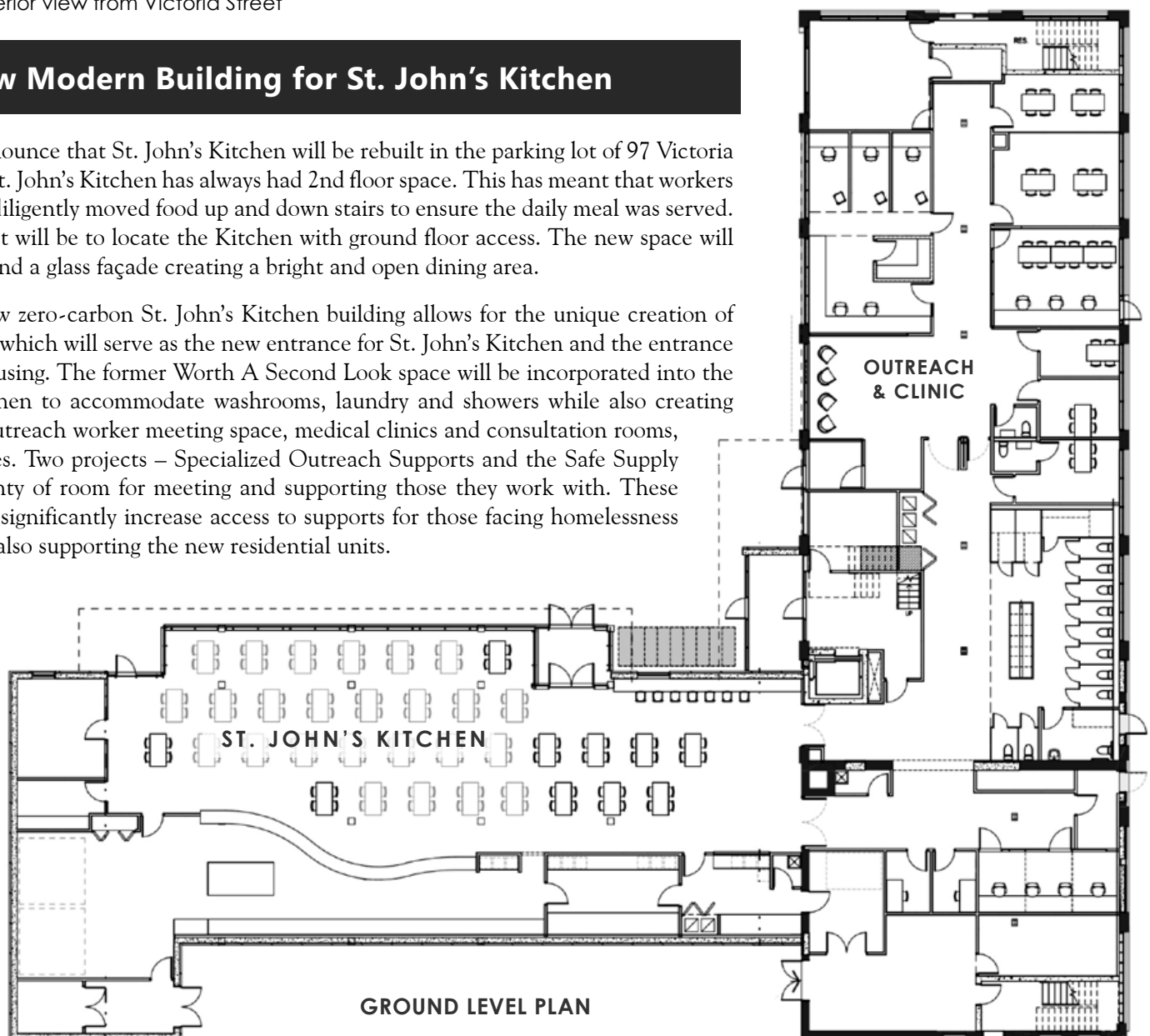
Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach that supports our community members dealing with the reality of homelessness by providing independent and permanent housing along with additional supports and services. An integrated model of common spaces and supports builds a community that generates roots and connectedness.

A New Modern Building for St. John's Kitchen

We are pleased to announce that St. John's Kitchen will be rebuilt in the parking lot of 97 Victoria North. For 37 years, St. John's Kitchen has always had 2nd floor space. This has meant that workers and volunteers have diligently moved food up and down stairs to ensure the daily meal was served. The gift of this project will be to locate the Kitchen with ground floor access. The new space will feature wood beams and a glass façade creating a bright and open dining area.

The design of the new zero-carbon St. John's Kitchen building allows for the unique creation of an internal courtyard which will serve as the new entrance for St. John's Kitchen and the entrance for the 38 units of housing. The former Worth A Second Look space will be incorporated into the wider St. John's Kitchen to accommodate washrooms, laundry and showers while also creating abundant space for outreach worker meeting space, medical clinics and consultation rooms, and community spaces. Two projects – Specialized Outreach Supports and the Safe Supply Project will have plenty of room for meeting and supporting those they work with. These enhanced spaces will significantly increase access to supports for those facing homelessness and addictions while also supporting the new residential units.

- Vibrant inclusive community centre
- Access to a web of supports
- Onsite healthcare with links to mental health and harm reduction supports



A Place of Safety and Dignity



97 Victoria N has long been a gathering place for those who are experiencing homelessness, are at risk of homelessness, or are street involved. St. John's Kitchen receives over 1000 unique

visitors per month, who come in to have hot, nutritious meals free of charge, and to access drop-in space, laundry, showers, washrooms and strategic problem-solving supports.

Life in congregate shelters and congregate drop-in spaces does serve basic needs in the short term. However it becomes unbearable over time as people lack privacy, rest and a place to feel secure.

We want to transform this space and create home for 38 people. Our goal is a place where residents can live safely and with dignity. The Working Centre has experience doing this in many spaces – University Ave, King Street, Charles Street, Queen Street – and now we can make this happen at 97 Victoria N.

Green Infrastructure and Funding

The new building will integrate a sustainable design approach including:

- No on-site fossil fuel consumption for the building facility
- Geo-thermal energy in combination with electrical energy as the major energy sources
- Geo-exchange heat pumps for space heating and domestic hot water
- Heat recovery on all exhaust air systems
- A high-performance building envelope including highly insulated enclosure assembly, with triple glazing in thermally broken frames, increased insulation, minimal air leakage and without thermal bridging
- Extensive use of natural light for interior lighting through passive means, and daylight sensing controls for artificial light
- LED based lighting to minimize electrical consumption
- Reduced water consumption fixtures.
- Mass timber structural system which will reduce embodied carbon
- Material choices and selections to reduce embodied carbon including local materials where appropriate to reduce transportation emissions
- Photo-voltaic panels installed on roof will provide additional onsite energy



The project will meet the CaGBC ZCB-Design requirements, for the maximum annual thermal energy demand intensity (TEDI) for Kitchener, in order to achieve a Net-Zero-Carbon Design certification.

We have applied to the federal government's Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program (CICBP) to help offset the extra costs that will result in a net-zero-carbon building. We hope to hear from this fund in the coming months.



Inside the new St. John's Kitchen space

38 Units of Supportive Housing

This project addresses the lack of supportive housing units. Every day at St. John's Kitchen, we support those who have lost connections with family and friends while dealing with mental health and drug issues while struggling to find housing.

The new units at 97 Victoria N will be rent geared to income. These units will be eligible for supportive housing funding provided by the Region of Waterloo, targeting those most at risk for homelessness. The new housing will have 24/7 staffing supports, and connections to community and health care resources. Supportive staff will actively problem-solve and help build stability.



- All units include a bed and bathroom
- Both floors include community kitchens
- Both floors include common areas and lounge space
- Accessible units will be available
- 24/7 staffing support

HOUSING UNITS
3rd FLOOR PLAN

Perimeter Development Donates \$1 Million

We are pleased to announce that PERIMETER Development has made a wonderful and generous contribution to the 97 Victoria N Making Home project. This donation is on top of the commitment Perimeter Development has made to shepherd and support this project from the original design to the final construction. This project is possible because of the support we have received from Perimeter Development and especially David Gibson, Craig Beattie, Hilary Abel and Nikita Thompson to coach us and guide the planning and design process. With rapid planning we have moved forward on architectural designs, environmental and site plan work, construction planning and a development of the fundraising campaign. We are so heartened by the Perimeter Development's commitment to walk with us through this process to create this needed housing in our downtown.



Learn more about the project or donate at: www.97victoria.theworkingcentre.org

What We Have Learned About Housing at UA

continued from page 3

overdose deaths of people that had called UA home. Some died here, others out in the community. Each death unique, eliciting different emotions and reactions. The first one woke us up to the reality of the opioid crisis. The shock of the first death that took place in the building. Discovering the individual days after they died, feeling at fault for not having been there to respond sooner, and ultimately the acceptance that the individual used alone in their room, and that if we are going to be angry, to direct our feelings towards the toxic supply of street drugs. Nevertheless, we carry on - the people that work at UA and the people that live at UA. A community has formed in this building. Supporting each other, laughing with each other. COVID has made this more difficult, yet community has formed. We see it more now than at any other time in our short history. Seven women are in the midst of moving to the new supportive housing provided by YWCA. Moving from our



“temporary” housing, to a more permanent place. We see how others support these women as they prepare for their move, and we see it in the hesitancy these women carry into a new building, with new people around them. Will they have people that they can trust, rely on to care for them, and watch their backs? Having this at UA, creates a time of excitement and fear as they move on.

We take comfort from simple joys that we get to be witness to. The sharing of a joke, witnessing the kindness shown to each other as they share. To see a person who lives here have the moment of self-awareness to address their mental health concerns. We also see the major wins. Having gone from responding to an average of 7 overdoses a week when we opened, to having responded to 8 in the past 3 months, while overdoses continue to happen at alarming numbers elsewhere in the community is impressive. Could it be that the small amount of stability and support, gives people hope, a desire for more?



44-54 Queen Street South



Renovations to create 19 units of housing on Queen Street South continue to progress. In mid-May we were granted our building permit. It was with great relief that we learned that both the Region of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener are covering development fees for selected

affordable housing projects. It is estimated this will save this project over \$250,000. The third floor is almost fully framed as the construction project gains momentum. Jeff Van Gysel, Kelvin Chatinyara and Vic Benson of Just Working Construction along with David McLagan and Robert Dyck have been leading the planning, design and construction work.

Worth A Second Look Furniture and Housewares



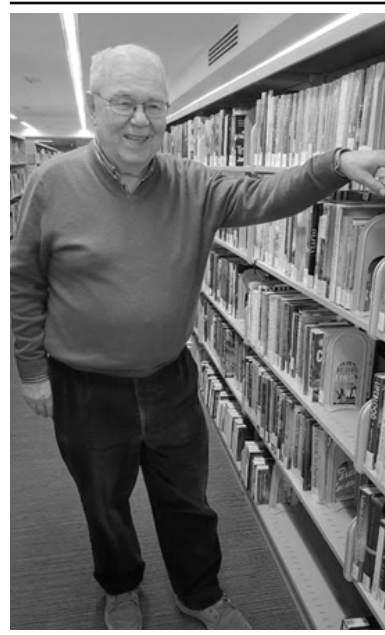
Worth A Second Look (WASL) has been extremely adaptable throughout the pandemic. In March 2020 the store had to close because of the pandemic. When it was time to open in July 2020, St. John's Kitchen was serving takeout meals from the WASL garage from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm. This was the garage where WASL had organized its deliveries and storage of garbage and recycling materials. This change has meant that WASL's new hours were Tuesday to Friday 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm and Saturday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. With reduced hours, WASL staff have been an important part of providing the extra services at St. John's Kitchen during the pandemic. The Making Home project will further displace WASL. However, a new plan is in the works and will be announced in the September issue. We are excited for this new phase of WASL.

A Salute with Gratitude to “the Book Man” Roman Dubinski

By Sandy Keller

Roman Dubinski has been an integral part and significant contributor to The Working Centre for 26 years. Roman began volunteering as a Board member with The Working Centre in 1996. He joined after retiring from the University of Waterloo, on the recommendation of Ken Westhues who was a member at the time.

Roman said he was drawn by The Working Centre's mission and actions to help the unemployed, which he thought was a worthy cause. The Working Centre reaches people, many of the most vulnerable in society who could “fall through the cracks”, and he felt it was an honourable thing to do. The Working Centre was about supporting people as it sought to



create a world that was livable and affordable.

As a Board member Roman was part of the negotiating team to acquire the location for St. John's Kitchen and Worth A Second Look thrift store. Roman remarked that “while touring the store, Joe asked if I would look after the book section. I gladly accepted. I spent my life reading, studying and teaching literature and thought it would be a pleasant way to spend my time.” Thus, his work began when Worth A Second Look opened its doors in 2005. Since then, he has dedicated 2 to 3 hours daily for 4, sometimes 5 days a week at what Roman called “the shop”. In time, he was affectionately referred to as “The Book Man”.

Roman's dedication was formally recognized in 2008 when a former student, Nancy Silcox, published an article in the “The Grand” magazine.

I asked Roman some questions about his work at Worth A Second Look.

What was a typical day like?

About 400 to 500 books arrived at Worth A Second Look on an average week. I sorted through the many bags and boxes. Duplicates were given to folks “upstairs” who came to St. John's Kitchen. To help shoppers, I grouped the books into 60 sections and placed most in alphabetical order on the store shelves. I continued to do this after receiving many appreciative comments. People started coming back. It really paid off. As many as 20,000 books were sold, on average, each year. During the time I volunteered, book sales brought in a total of over \$300,000.

Reflecting back, what makes you feel most satisfied with your volunteer experience at Worth A Second Look?

Basically, getting books out to people who loved to read. I enjoyed many pleasant conversations with people about the books they were reading or wanted to read. Folks occasionally asked me to watch for titles and subjects, such as chess or prayer books, and I would set books aside for them.

A volunteer recently asked about Diana Gabaldon's “Outlander” series. I recognized the title, a popular one, and was able to help her out. I recall a man who, by accident, donated his wife's collection of Edna Staebler cookbooks, which are a big seller at the shop. Needless to say, I went to work searching for Edna Staebler cookbooks so his wife could get some of them back. He was grateful! It was also rewarding to donate many books to teachers who were eager to have books on hand for young readers.

Over the years I got to know a lot of authors which expanded my joy of reading. And it was good to know that so many books could be shared with other readers and not added to the landfill.

What's next?

I will always value the important work done by The Working Centre, its staff and many volunteers. It has been remarkable to witness the generous contributions of time, money and expertise to provide supports to marginalized people in our communities. Many contributors were showcased at the Mayors' Dinner over the years that I attended and supported financially. My hope is for a future that also includes more publicly-funded programs and supports to make the hardship of homelessness and poverty a thing of the past in Waterloo Region.

Submitted, with love and respect for my dad, by Sandy Keller.



Sally Lerner visiting the Hacienda Market Garden

Remembering Sally Lerner

This winter we were saddened by the death of Sally Lerner, a long time professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Waterloo. In the early 1980's she helped form The Working Centre's ideas on how to respond to growing unemployment. She had an active presence, engaging the community to critically think about the meaning of work. Sally was known for her ability to facilitate students to choose their own educational adventure. Many of her students found their way to The Working Centre and enriched our work.

Sally was the author of an influential early book, *Basic Income: Security for All Canadians* that helped lay the groundwork for the current debate on adopting the concept of a guaranteed annual income as a national policy. Sally's friends noted that her students have moved across the planet in a variety of lives and careers ranging from pioneering sustainable agriculture to what became the Right-to-Repair and Maker social movements.

We met Sally 40 years ago this Fall. Her friendship was treasured and was a rock of support. In tribute we are publishing Sally's 2016 review of *Transition to Common Work*, a book that summarizes in so many ways the kind of work she helped to inspire. Sally died in her 90th year and will always be missed.

Building Community at The Working Centre

By Sally Lerner

Published in 2016

In 1982, The Working Centre responded to crippling unemployment that resulted from plant closings and job losses in Waterloo Region. The project started in a small second story former apartment on Queen Street South, where people looking for work or other support found a warm welcome. It was a place to sit, with coffee, newspapers, information about ESL and other programs, a telephone, a message board and, perhaps most important, someone who wanted to listen, who understood their needs and stories.

Transition to Common Work: Building Community at the Working Centre tells the story of how the initial commitment of Joe and Stephanie Mancini to establish a response to unemployment grew into a welcoming, supportive and inclusive place-to-be (now sometimes called a "third space"). The project unfolded to shape individual lives, myriad interpersonal relationships and, eventually, a special way of living and working. This book has much to teach us today as people's expectations about work and way of life are being upended yet again.

In the 30 years since its formal establishment, the Working Centre has grown slowly but steadily, involving people from every strand of the fabric of Kitchener life. From the unemployed and underemployed through church and labour stalwarts to politicians, university folk, business leaders and artists – many have been drawn to become part of the Working Centre community.

In her perceptive foreword to the book, innovation analyst Dr. Frances Westley recalls her curiosity after visiting the Working Centre and talking at length with the Mancinis:

"It was clear that something unusual was going on, but it was not clear how. How could these two gentle, kind, responsive, and unassuming people have produced what felt like an empire of innovation – including multiple renovated buildings and interlocking initiatives – from the restaurant to the gardens to the St. John's Kitchen, to the outreach program"

Westley concluded that:

"What this book contains cannot be described as a formula, but it does describe the alchemy that

a selfless and dedicated few can ignite and therefore holds lessons worth learning for all those who are unhappy with the world as it is and who believe that change is possible."

As with any sort of alchemy, the magic is in the details, which emerge in this book from the voices and stories of individuals' struggles and the triumphs of mutual help, cooperation and friendship. Building community is an ongoing challenge, whether in your neighbourhood, your workplace or your city. This story of the Working Centre makes clear that engaging and including all comers in many kinds of "good work" for the common benefit is key to individual actualization as well as long-term community sustainability.

A concern with moral and social justice was central to the inception of the Working Centre. Its founding principles are embodied in six "virtues" that served as its foundation and guided its development: work as gift; living simply to leave more room for the other; serving others; rejecting status; building community and creating community tools. Chapter four elucidates these seemingly simple principles and following chapters detail the "ethical imagination" underlying the Centre's egalitarian salary structure and the remarkable "community tools" that instantiate the Working Centre's philosophy: a thriving thrift store, a commons with café and book store, a used-clothing boutique, computer and bicycle repair/recycling facilities, successful catering and market-garden enterprises. All offer work that is fulfilling, not least because it benefits the whole region.

Not surprisingly, the importance to human well-being of how work is rewarded is a central theme of *Transition to Common Work*.

"The Working Centre has endeavoured to create a level playing field so that each worker can reach their potential. Our work culture has been enhanced by not linking salary to a performance evaluation... We have seen that happiness and satisfaction do not come from getting ahead or triumphing over colleagues, but from making one's community a better place and from the personal recognition of a job well done. Extreme consumerism, fueled by advertising and a hyper-competitive culture, is often seen as a potent enemy of a meaningful life. Under its spell, "We think we have to work for [more] money when in fact most people would rather work to learn and create new things. People strive to find meaning in work that has lasting benefit."

The Working Centre renovation projects that have produced much-needed affordable and transition housing in Kitchener, initially carried out largely by volunteers who learned skills as they worked, are seen as a prime examples of this approach.

Perhaps most relevant to the

currently evolving nature of work is this observation in *Transition to Common Work*:

"Under the patina of our consumer society is an ever-growing array of depression, anxiety, substance abuse and impulse disorders. Many of these psychological responses are the result of unpleasant, harsh environments. Canadian society, like much of the Western world, has placed a high value on money, possessions and appearances at the same time that long-term secure jobs have been replaced by a growing trend of temporary positions and insecure working conditions, making these goals more difficult to attain."

The complex mix of factors contributing to insecure working conditions – globalization, increasing use of computer-driven technologies in both blue- and white-collar work, the consequent fading of union power, pressures on the private sector to be competitive – are experienced by increasing numbers of workers as high levels of stress and dysfunction in their personal and working lives.

Just ask the cashier on a "zero-hours contract," who waits by the phone to learn when she must show up for work and for how long, how it feels. Or consider that college graduate living with his parents, still looking in vain for a job (or two or three) to allow pay down of a student loan and his own place to live. Similarly placed is the thirty-something "consultant" who gets her jobs through a temp agency and is never sure she has done well enough to get called again.

The stressful nature of the increasingly insecure world of work has been well documented. See, for example, the Canadian study *Working Without Commitments: The Health Effects of Precarious Employment*, W. Lewchuk, M. Clark and A. de Wolff, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011, or just Google "precarious work" or "precarariat." While some workers enjoy the flexibility possible under new work rules, many more are barely able to survive mentally or financially. Fortunately, there is increased recognition of the problems created by non-existent, unpaid and insecure employment, represented by the recent upsurge of public discussion and debate about inequality, a living wage and need for a guaranteed basic income as a stable platform on which to build a meaningful life.

Transition to Common Work: Building Community at the Working Centre speaks directly to questions raised by structural unemployment, the ongoing shift of risks from employers to employees and other dystopic aspects of 21st century life. The book provides the key to understanding how the Working Centre evolved to become a community rich in good work and meaningful living that has thrived for more than 30 years. We have much to learn from it. There are alternatives.



Help support the Making Home campaign

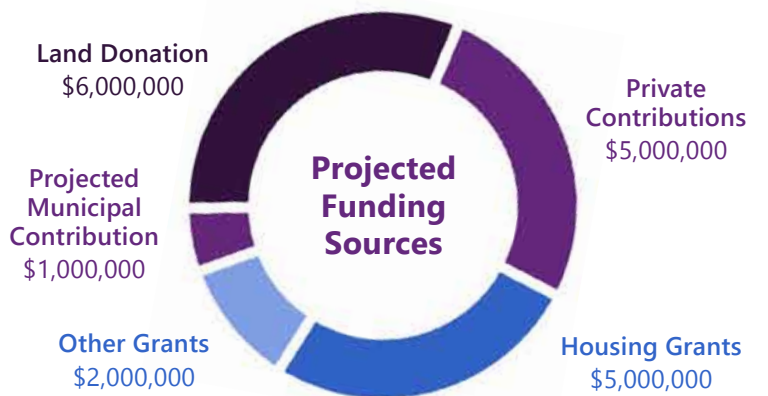
Our campaign goal is \$5,000,000. Be part of the solution and help build an inclusive community where all people can live safely and with dignity.

Ways you can help:

1. Consider your own donation.
2. Grow our circle of support by inviting friends, family members, and groups that you are a part of to make a contribution.
3. Visit 97victoria.theworkingcentre.org for updates and announcements about upcoming events.
4. Think creatively with us. Do you have something unique that you can offer? We invite conversation and collaboration.

To talk more, please contact:

Joe & Stephanie Mancini
 makinghome@theworkingcentre.org
 519-743-1151 x107



We want to thank Perimeter Development and BNKC Architects who have partnered with The Working Centre to make this important project possible.

A special thanks to the Vidyard team led by Marcy Dobozy and Tolu Ogunyanwo for helping The Working Centre design a social media fundraising campaign for the Making Home project.

Yes! I want to help make affordable housing possible!

Personal Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Name for Recognition: _____

I / We prefer to remain anonymous

Name on Card: _____

Credit Card #: _____

Expiry Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contribution Amount:

\$1500 \$1000 \$500

\$250 \$100 \$50

Other: _____

Pledge Payment Timeframe:

Once 5 Years: \$ _____ /yr

Payment Method:

Visa MC Amex

E-transfer Cash Cheque

Please make cheque payable to The Working Centre