

OBSID and Streetscapes – partners in supportive housing in Observatory

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please direct all enquiries about this project to Amanda Kirk at OBSID – amanda@obsid.org.za or 021 448 7090.

What's the project and who is involved?

The Observatory Improvement District (OBSID) and Khulisa Streetscapes are aiming to pilot a supportive housing model for people living on the streets of Observatory and nearby. This will enable Streetscapes to learn more about the impact of providing housing on the wellbeing in general of those with substance use disorders.

Where does this fit in to OBSID's programmes and projects?

This is an expansion of our current partnership with Streetscapes, who have been funded by OBSID and have been offering social development services and sheltered work opportunities to people living on the streets in Observatory for the past 11 months.

The project forms part of OBSID's efforts to address homelessness in Observatory through a developmental approach that includes sheltered work opportunities, harm reduction strategies and supportive housing programmes.

It is not intended as a one size fits all solution, but as a pathway off the streets for those individuals who choose to participate in the project.

What is supportive housing?

Supportive housing is a combination of housing and services intended as a cost-effective way to help people live more stable, productive lives. Applying "housing first" principles, this type of housing resource, offered with less stringent conditions regarding substance use or mental health treatment, has been shown to be an effective way of addressing homelessness.

It has demonstrated particular success with the chronic homeless, generally considered the most difficult category to reach and provide services for. "Housing first" programmes worldwide have demonstrated success in assisting clients to improve their general wellbeing and access services as needed.

What's the difference between supportive housing and shelter in place sites / microsites?

This model is longer term, residents contribute to the running costs and the facility is only used for this purpose (i.e. it's not a repurposed church hall). It offers a longer term option to people and isn't linked to lockdown levels or other restrictions.

Tell us about the project

The Observatory pilot would offer a range of services aligned to a harm reduction approach. Abstinence can be a goal, but it is set by the client, not as a requirement to remain in the house.

The chronic homeless are often unable to meet the abstinence needs of conventional facilities. A harm reduction based approach, with its focus on creating empowering non-judgemental and trusting relationships with clients, enables them to set their own goals aimed at reducing harm to themselves, harm to others and harm to the space they occupy.

At launch, accommodation placement would be offered to 20-25 people sharing rooms, all of whom would be participants in the Khulisa Streetscapes programmes.

Should the pilot prove successful and once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, placement would be offered to more people. Intakes would be done continuously as spaces become available.

The house will have space for a sick room and emergency accommodation.

No children would be admitted to the house, couples will be accommodated.

Services offered will include:

- Accommodation and meals (breakfast, supper)
- Daily community meeting in the morning to address issues and motivate residents
- Psychosocial support offered during the day in work sites, including individual and group sessions when necessary, assisted health screening and clinic visits, family outreach
- Access to Streetscapes referral networks – e.g. SANPUD, TB / HIV Care and others for individual support
- Sheltered or supportive work opportunities, 5 days per week on one of the Observatory work sites or at a Streetscapes site in the CBD.

Why have OBSID picked Streetscapes for this project?

Streetscapes has already successfully initiated two supportive housing programmes – one in Walmer Estate and one in Kuilsriver. Micro housing is planned for the Kuilsriver facility, providing a more permanent and affordable housing solution for those who most need it.

They are currently engaged in a research project with the HSRC as regards the impact of supportive housing on this population group (which would be extended to include the Observatory pilot) and are

scoping out a mental and primary health care model for discussion with both public and private healthcare providers and funders – which would also be extended to the Observatory pilot.

Who's paying for this project?

OBSID will be a seed funding partner along with Streetscapes. Streetscapes will apply for registration for all three of its supportive housing sites as shelters with the Department of Social Development in the next application cycle for funding.

Community partnerships will be essential to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Neighbouring Improvement Districts may also come on board as funders given that street based people tend to move localities depending on access to services and support.

What options are available to street based people currently – and why don't they take them?

Many individuals have lived on the streets for years or decades, might have concurrent substance use or mental health issues and are known to often resist or reject the help conventionally offered.

Currently the only accommodation option available for this population is in public temporary shelters. However, only 2500 beds are available for an estimated 8000 homeless people in Cape Town and there are few shelters nearby to Observatory.

Shelters offer a very limited solution. Due to the high degree of marginalization, limited services and the abstinence-based approach in shelters, the chronic homeless find it hard if not impossible to adapt to them.

Those living on the streets in Observatory have support networks in the area and are familiar with the location, making it difficult for them to consider living elsewhere.

What about street based people in Observatory who don't want housing? What services can they still access?

OBSID is not focussing its social development efforts solely on the supportive housing project.

We will continue with individual case management and support as needed. This includes sponsorships, assistance with applying for identify documents, grants and bank accounts, referrals and ongoing support.

People who ask to be considered for the Streetscapes programme will be referred to the programme team via the OBSID Social Development Programme Coordinator (Bongi Sika).

What other organisations do OBSID / Streetscapes partner with and are they going to continue as partners on this project?

Anyone who accesses services via OBSID (including the housing project) can be referred to any of our partners – or our partners are contacted to assist our team with a client's specific needs.

OBSID and Streetscapes have relationships with the City of Cape Town's Street People's Programme, the Department of Social Development, Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre, the Community Work Programme, SWEAT, Mosaic, TB / HIV Care, SANPUD and others.

We also accompany clients (unless they ask us not to) to their medical appointments at clinics, hospitals and specialist facilities (e.g. District 6 Day Hospital, Groote Schuur, Valkenberg).

Streetscapes represent Designated Vulnerable Groups on the City's Sub-Council 16 committee.

Who is eligible for housing and on what conditions?

Access to the house will be limited to people who are registered on the Streetscapes programme because "housing first" has been shown to work most effectively when combined with psychosocial support and sheltered work.

This means that they have completed their intake protocols, are enrolled onto the sheltered work programme and are receiving ongoing psychosocial and other support.

In some cases, housing may be addressed first and then the person will be introduced to the work programme.

People living on the house pay towards the running of the house from the participation stipend they receive from the programme. This payment covers rent, food and toiletries.

The house will have space for emergency shelter, this will be managed by the Streetscapes team on a case by case basis on referral from the OBSID Social Development Programme Coordinator

What about health and safety and public safety?

OBSID will be contributing towards the cost of night security officers for the facility as well as the management and control of this resource, in order to ensure that issues are managed inside of the OBSID mandate. SAPS and law enforcement will work with us in supportive capacities.

Residents entering the house will have health screenings completed by medical practitioners and all applicable Covid-19 health and safety measures will be adhered to.

Residents who present with illness, including symptoms of Covid-19, will be supported through normal Streetscapes protocols and referral mechanisms.

Can people use drugs or consume alcohol in the house?

No substance use will be allowed in the house, but residents don't have to be "clean" from substances to live there.

Can people leave the house?

There will be a night time curfew set, so as to minimize disturbances to other residents. Anyone who is resident in the house can leave the house for other accommodation options (including back onto the street if they so wish) at any time, no-one is obliged to stay.

The residents will determine how visitors will be managed.

Who sets the rules?

Streetscapes will define the non-negotiables (around behaviour or actions that are illegal).

Thereafter, community led problem solving and decision making is used to address any issues or incidents that have arisen or to make decisions about operations of the house, including when deciding that a resident should leave for repeated infractions of community set rules. The approach of "the community living wellbeing of all trumps the wellbeing of one" is taken.

Before opening the pilot, the people wishing to live in the house will participate in a workshop to clarify the 'vision' for the house based on what they want to achieve by moving in. This discussion would include agreeing on the rules (including allocation of cleaning and cooking responsibilities if not contracted out), deciding on the level of rent and other issues.

How can the community support this pilot project?

The community of Observatory can support this initiative through cash donations, furnishing and foodstuff donations to the project. Items needed include:

- Bedding and towels
- Curtains
- Clothing
- TV's, books, DVD's
- Kitchen equipment
- Non-perishable foodstuffs, toiletries and household cleaning products.

Monetary donations can be made - either to the overall project or to sponsor a stipend for someone on the programme.

Volunteers would be welcomed, so please get in touch if you can add value through your skills, knowledge and expertise.

Can this serve as a community kitchen?

This will be assessed once the house is operational and we have a better idea of space and resource constraints as regards food storage, preparation and service.