

Timestamp	Name (first and last)	Address of residence or property owned	Meeting date	Agenda Item (Property address or description of agenda item)	Position on Agenda Item (as applicable)	How would you like to make your public comment?	If you are providing a written comment, please leave here:	Are you representing yourself as an individual or speaking on behalf of a group?
4/22/2023 11:01:41	Diana Durkes	1111 Grove Street, Evanston IL 60201	4/26/2023	Margarita Inn Special Use	Opposed	Written comment	<p>Dear Commissioners,</p> <p>I live four doors away from the Margarita temporary homeless shelter. Because the Special Use Permit meeting before the LUC is coming up on April 26, I'm writing with some perspectives on what to do about people experiencing homelessness in Evanston. My immediate neighbors and I are not against a shelter on Oak Street. We've said this several times, but as Mr. Cameel Halim recently wrote, our words have been twisted. In reality, we have been relaying research and ideas about the shelter and homelessness to the city council, mayor and staff for over two years. Evanston cannot simply outsource a solution to homelessness; the issue has grown too serious. Current operations are causing more harm than good, as residents and businesses have attested. The city needs to take charge and build a plan, one that is independent of the objectives of Connections for the Homeless. The city can be a leader, rather than a follower of Connections. One idea, put forth by Clare Kelly, is to create a scaled down, mixed use shelter. This type of model can help dispel the stigma of homelessness, the very stigma that has been perpetuated at the Margarita fortress. A shelter of temporary housing with a restaurant or cafe would normalize living as and living with homelessness. If Evanston's goal is intentional integration, this is part of it. The shelter must be for local people experiencing homelessness. Giving a leg up to Evanston families, men, women and children should be its goal and mission. As one alderperson said to me in a meeting, "This is Evanston. We take care of our own." Quality over quantity should be the policy. Studies show it's unhealthy to crowd 70 people experiencing varying levels of crisis into one building. A maximum of 30 residents will give a better outcome of success, with a preference for Evanston families, men, women and children. Evanston school-aged children especially deserve that chance for success. Living with the shelter for three years, I've seen the effect on my neighborhood and downtown. There's been a significant downturn. Where none occurred before the shelter, I now see drug deals on the corner and defecation on my lawn. The major factor for this activity is Connection's model for the shelter. It is not designed as a local resource. Instead, it's a regional northern Illinois homeless hub that serves multiple municipalities. To help steer policy for a shelter that works for all stakeholders, including city residents, businesses, Connections and its clients, the neighborhood has authored a new Good Neighbor Agreement. In doing so, we hope the city will listen to our input, and that of all Evanston residents, and build a better plan for the shelter. I urge you to think critically about the issue of homelessness in Evanston. It's easy to agree---we must do something to help the unhoused in our community. But there's no substitute for careful thought and sound planning.</p> <p>Sincerely, Diana Durkes</p>	
4/25/2023 10:47:23	Eric Paset	1402 Oak Street	4/26/2023	Margarita Inn	Opposed	In person		Self
4/25/2023 12:50:48	Gregory Morrow	McGaw YMCA, 1000	4/26/2023	1566 Oak Avenue	Opposed	In person		Group
4/25/2023 13:08:05	Les Epstein	4th Ward	4/26/2023	1566 Oak Ave Special Use Permit	Opposed	Written comment	<p>Re: Non-Negotiable Condition to Add to the Special Use Permit for the Margarita Inn</p> <p>Dear Land Use Commission: I'm writing to suggest a mandatory non-negotiable condition to be added to the Special Use Permit for the Margarita Inn which is that any resident of the Margarita Inn caught panhandling in downtown Evanston will be expelled from living there. This should be mandatory as there are many deserving prospective clients that would gladly abide by this condition to be able to stay at the Margarita Inn and avail themselves of the services offered there. Please add this much needed mandatory condition to the Special Use Permit for the good of the neighbors and neighborhood .</p> <p>Sincerely, Les Epstein 4th Ward</p>	
4/25/2023 13:33:55	Valerie Davis	1570 Oak Ave	4/26/2023	1566 Oak Ave Special Use Permit	Opposed	Written comment	<p>(I was unable to figure out how to attach a photo for clarity, but I did send a photo to the Zoning Dept today via email) The photo is of the front of 1570 Oak Ave which is 4.5 feet from 1566 Oak Ave (Margarita Inn). To the Land Use Commission— I'm writing to you regarding the application for a Special Use Permit for a Rooming House at the Margarita Inn requested by Connections for the Homeless. I live next door at 1570 Oak Ave. Specifically, I live 4.5 feet from the Margarita Inn. I've attached a photo for clarity. So except for the neighbor below me, I live the closest to the Margarita Inn. I'm writing to you as a long-term Evanston resident and tenant who's lived in my apartment for 16.5 years. The renters, and specifically the long-term renters, were left out of this entire process by not being notified of public hearings, etc. about the Margarita Inn becoming a permanent homeless shelter. The City of Evanston appears not to care about renters which include long-term residents such as myself. My apartment building has 91 apartments, and there is the apartment building across the street at 1575 Oak Ave which is also an 8-story apartment building as well as the apartment building next door to mine at 1576 Oak Ave. These 3 addresses represent several hundred households that have been left out of the process for the Special Use Permit for a Rooming House at the Margarita Inn in order to become a permanent homeless shelter. The City of Evanston only notified property owners and business owners but not the renters who financially support these landlords and businesses. The Margarita Inn operating as a homeless shelter has been extremely disruptive to our neighborhood block. As mentioned at previous hearings, there have been hundreds of emergency services calls which have been 2 to 3 times per week on average for the last 3 years and sometimes twice in one day which I have personally witnessed. It's been very disruptive to the neighbors as these EMS calls are 24 hrs/day. I'm mainly referring to the Fire Department calls and not the police calls. I think City of Evanston staff or the Evanston Fire Department should produce a report to show how many calls have been placed regarding the Margarita Inn since Connections for the Homeless moved into it in March of 2020 to the present to see if these calls have decreased, increased, or stayed the same? I should not, as an Evanston long-term renter have to do a FOIA request to get this information. And what affects me directly is when an ambulance is dispatched to the Margarita Inn so is a fire truck whose engine idles in front of my apartment as well as the flashing lights and sirens at all times 24 hrs/day and night. Even if EFD uses the quiet approach late at night, the idling truck engines are still loud and disruptive to neighbors trying to sleep, study, or work from home. And as for the total number of emergency calls to the Margarita Inn, if a call is made to EMS and the emergency vehicles pull up in front of the Margarita Inn that should count as a call even if they do not go inside the building as it's still a disturbance to the neighbors. I do not see the number of emergency calls changing in the future. The stress and strain of this is affecting the immediate neighbors. Furthermore, I just recently learned that they increased the maximum capacity of the Margarita Inn by 10% from 63-70 residents which is unacceptable as this will cause an increase in emergency services calls which adds more stress and strain for the neighbors living close to the Margarita Inn. Therefore, please deny the Special Use Permit for a Rooming House for the Margarita Inn to Connections for the Homeless which will make the Margarita Inn a permanent homeless shelter because two of the Special Use Standards are not met which are Standard C) It will not cause a negative cumulative effect, when its effect is considered in conjunction with the cumulative effect of various special uses of all types on the immediate neighborhood and the effect of the proposed type of special use upon the City as a whole; and Standard D) It does not interfere with or diminish the value of property in the neighborhood; There at least 3 "for sale" signs at the corner of Oak/Grove. Although I don't know for sure why they are for sale, it could be because the quality of life of the neighbors has diminished since Connections for the Homeless moved into the Margarita Inn which looks to become a permanent homeless shelter. This is the wrong location for it which does not work for the neighborhood. Please don't ignore the neighbor complaints about this. The Margarita Inn operating as a homeless shelter has negatively affected the quality of life for the immediate neighbors and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>Sincerely, Valerie Davis</p>	

4/25/2023 16:51:16	Tim Breitberg	1101 Grove St #2C	4/26/2023	Margarita Inn Land Use Committee	Opposed	Written comment	<p>The "good neighbor agreement" provided by Connections For The Homeless has no input from anyone within the neighborhood who is not a client or supporter of theirs. Most of the committee that drafted this lives between Skokie and Indiana of all places. Connections calls me a NIMBY/racist bad actor. They have brought such drama to our once quiet building, to the point that there has been 4 units in the building put up for sale (pending a 5th) which is almost 20%, 20% of the people living 2 doors down are so afraid for their safety that they have decided to move. I can't afford to move. I've been in the building 20 years, and until Connections' occupancy of that hotel, the neighborhood has been nothing but pleasant. Walking home during the early pandemic was a gauntlet of worrying who is out there drinking (my favorite was a guy with a baseball bat in one hand and a fifth of vodka in the other). Screaming at all hours of the night. The constant EPD/EPD visits lighting up my whole apartment. Connections higher-ups saying they don't know who these bad actor people are that are disturbing my peace, as I watch said actors enter the Margarita Inn. Why do I have to have a quality of life decrease due to whatever this organization is doing? Everything about how this is happening feels like back-room deals and shady practices. Connections and the City is even trying to prevent this comment from going on record saying only Cameel Halim gets to comment. That's very against my rights. Others in the neighborhood have offered out a very detailed alternate Good Neighbor Agreement (actually drafted by people that reside within 500' of The Margarita Inn including Connections Staff and Clients) which I have read and think is a very good solution for the issues Connections has brought to the meeting. I have seen Connections higher-up Nia T dismiss this with a "that's just a PR stunt". What PR? The only stunt I have seen so far is a signing of a "shill" agreement by Mayor Biss and Betty Bogg at publicity event in a very tone-deaf location.</p> <p>I put a FOIA request for the names/addresses of the drafting committee (#23-728) and got this as a response: No Responsive Documents The public records requested do not exist. However, I was soon after passed an email chain of the drafting committee and this is what I found out via Google/Facebook/LinkedIn and other public internet resources: [name/email address/relation to C4H/distance from Margarita Inn (aka GZ/ground zero)] Max Seeley Sue Loellbach Keegan Olson Tina White jniewusma@cityofevanston.org &lt;jniewusma@cityofevanston.org&gt;evanston 4th ward2600' from ground zero Annie Coakley Carl Kettler Chelsea Sherlock Eileen Wiviott Elizabeth Raife Gretchen Brauer Jean Cunningham Nathan Kostant Rae Rich Robert Todd Sharika Houston Sharon Pines Suzanne Calderz</p>	
4/26/2023 12:52:57	Gregory Morrow	1000 Grove Street #519, Evanston IL 60201	4/26/2023	1566 Oak Avenue - Margarita Inn Zoning	Opposed	Written comment	<p>So, my wonder is that this email address: jniewusma@cityofevanston.org a public service person (my decided to do what he wants vs what the community wants alderperson) did not report that this committee existed with my FOIA request. What other things are being hidden? This all feels like a scam painted over with "good intentions". Any article within Evanston Now's reporting of Connections For The Homeless/Margarita Inn is rife with comments with great info about everything wrong that is Gregory Morrow , 1000 Grove St., #519, Evanston IL 60201, <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/gregory-morrow-wioa-careers/">https://www.linkedin.com/in/gregory-morrow-wioa-careers/</a> April 26th, 2023 Greetings Evanston Land Use Commission Members, My name is Gregory Morrow. a seven - year Evanston 4th Ward resident, residing at the McGaw YMCA on Grove Street, within 500 feet of the Margarita Inn. I am writing to express my concerns about the Margarita Inn, managed since March 2020 as a shelter by Connections for the Homeless. About me: I am a survivor of homelessness. In the past decade, I've worked for two homeless services agencies, Chicago - based Streetwise, from April - May 2022 at Connections for the Homeless here in Evanston, as an SSDI Benefits Specialist. I am currently employed as a Career Coach in Evanston by a leading area workforce nonprofit. Here is my Linked In profile. As my role at Connections was not the right fit, I voluntarily moved on. My parting was amicable (my supervisor was Tina White, Director of Community Programs); I am not writing as a "disgruntled" ex - employee. I am grateful for the vital work that Connections does to grow equity for our homeless citizens. They selflessly assist with rent and housing, have an excellent clinical/medical team, a fine walk - in program at Hilda's Place, a much - needed food pantry, outreach, and many other crucial services. Their service staff are all top - notch. Evanston is blessed to have these resources that Connections so generously provides to those in need. It is distressing to me that I cannot say the same about CFTH's management of the Margarita Inn; it is difficult to write this. Retired Chief of the Evanston Police Department, Cmdr. Richard Eddington, publicly spoke at the November 7th, 2022, Human Services Commission hearing, stating that Connections "has a very difficult time enforcing rules and maintaining order." To provide you some insight, I'll buttress his statement with my own general observations of what I saw when I worked at the Margarita Inn: I was appalled at the open alcohol/drug use/dealing, alarming guest altercations, the general chaos and havoc. I was confounded by the disdain of Margarita Inn management (specifically Director of Community Programs Tina White and Operations Manager Andrew Seibert) for "any" neighborhood concerns; critics of the Margarita were deigned "pests... racists... troublemakers... making stuff up..." (Tina lives in Skokie; Andrew in Chicago). In lieu of working diligently in good faith with our community to be a "good neighbor", Connections management - led by ED Betty Bogg and Director of Development &amp; Communications Nia Tavoularis - arrogantly consider CFTH's purchase of the Margarita a "done deal", which is "interesting", as the Margarita is a "guest" - and a "non - paying" one at that! - in our midst. Only "now", when Connections is seeking to purchase the property, do they make disingenuous gestures of "caring". Connections has cavalierly "warehoused" homeless at the Margarita since March 2020 - hence Connections, to gain ever more funding, IMO is "profiting" off others' misery. Guests are not required to have any "action plan" to better their lives; IME such a plan is an "absolute" necessity for the homeless to gain agency, independence, and eventually a stable and safe life. While some guests toil mightily towards self - sufficiency and succeed, many have holed up there for years; the Margarita is a dandy "party pad" for their drugging, drinking, and criminality. A nice private room/bath, free premium cable TV, three meals per, maid/laundry service, and absolutely no obligations to do "anything" - nirvana for those who are keen to grift off "the system". Connections, using their flawed "Do No Harm" social work model, promotes this dysfunction. If Connections truly cared, they'd deliver required programming empowering their guests to access a dignified life. Connection's MO is "reactive", not "pro - active" ... Class X felons - including sex offenders - are housed with mothers and their children; in July 2021 there was a child sex abuse/human trafficking investigation at Margarita Inn. Drug addicts/dealers and alcoholics are mixed in with folks who are bravely trying to conquer their addictions (Margarita staff are trained to administer Narcan). Many guests suffer crippling mental health issues - their needs are often ignored, as treatment is deemed "optional". In numerous instances, per police reports, Margarita staff encouraged or assented to criminal conduct by neglecting to take proper action. An example is a May 16th, 2022, police incident battery report: staff told an injured guest, a victim of a battery, to not call the police because they did not want a police presence. Instead of accessing medical care, the guest "slept it off" until morning, and then went to the police station to make a report and then a medical check. Police calls for service are extensive: 187 calls between March 2020 and March 2022; these include death investigations, drug overdoses, harassment, sex offenses, guest with a gun, assault and battery. Per EPD records, this mayhem has continued into 2023...</p> <p>Any "racist" accusations against Margarita detractors are of course nonsensical. The Margarita is a dangerous place - so why should anyone vulnerable, and especially our citizens of color, endure such conditions? I know that Connections ED Betty Bogg, Program Director Tina White, and Director of Development &amp; Communications Nia Tavoularis would not for a second put up with the conditions under which Margarita guests live. That they are playing the race card is despicable. These are three people "of privilege" who've no inkling of how "the other half" really lives and struggles - they think that "designing programs" from a "Do No Harm" social work curriculum is "helping" others. In fact, it's a "raw deal" for those in need - the opposite of compassion. The actions of Ms. Bogg, Ms. White, and Ms. Tavoularis - who are the epitome of the affluent white "management class" - are IMO a stark example of "systemic racism" in our welcoming Evanston community. As a white person, I am very deeply ashamed of - and enraged by - their lack of integrity.... I am not a "NIMBY" type of person. I would gladly welcome and support (by volunteering and donating) a well - managed transitional living shelter in our neighborhood; many others would too. Such a facility could be a sterling model of homeless services that we could all support and be proud of. But despite generous funding and excellent resources, what Connections has offered us so far with their management of the Margarita Inn is simply not a viable or "safe space" for Margarita guests, staff, and our greater Evanston community. We "could" have the very best, but instead Connections is offering us a "lowest common denominator" facility, and I am not sanguine - despite their assurances - that anything will change. Their proposed "Good Neighbor Agreement" is simply a joke... Thank you very much for listening to me. If you've any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. You are also free to share this email with any interested parties. Respectfully, Gregory Morrow</p>	
4/26/2023 15:22:25	Paula Scholl	819 Madison St.	4/26/2023	1566 Oak Ave	In favor	Written comment	<p>I am writing in favor of granting a Special Use Permit to Connections for the Homeless for the Margarita Inn. The working group that created the original Good Neighbor Agreement has put considerable time and thought into an agreement that ensures accountability and practicality. The "Housing First" model has been shown to work well through extensive social science research, and should be maintained. Connections' ability to offer this service in downtown Evanston is a rare opportunity to house individuals that would otherwise likely be surviving on the streets in downtown Evanston anyway. The alternative GNA proposed at the last minute would reduce Connections' ability to provide housing by 57%. The alternative GNA's proposed requirement to provide proof of prior Evanston address is particularly unworkable for many individuals that have not had stable housing in the prior months/years. The LUC, mayor, and 4th ward alderman have already indicated support for the Special Use. The issue has only been reopened before the LUC as a result of a injunction for the benefit of a single investor, which has reopened the door for multiple comments. It's time to allow Connections to get on with the work of promoting safe and stable housing without further delay. Thank you.</p>	
4/26/2023 16:12:12	Cecile McHugh	1926 Orrington Ave.	4/26/2023	Margarita Inn Special	Opposed	In person		Self
4/26/2023 16:52:46	Tina Paden	1122 Emerson Street	4/26/2023			In person		Self