

Visit to London, Ontario and the University of Western Ontario
Trip Report
26 and 27 October, 2011

ASH Representation: Christopher Collmorgen and Sam Almsaddi
Ottawa Police Services: Sergeant Matt Skof and Constable Ryan Pierce

Overview

The purpose of the trip – organized by Ottawa Police Services – was to better understand how the University of Western Ontario and the City of London, Ontario, are addressing the issues and concerns of near-campus neighborhoods.

London has a population of approximately 330,000, with 32,000 students attending University of Western Ontario (UWO) and 16,000 student attending Fanshawe College.

UWO has 4400 residence beds and guarantees a bed for all first year students that want one, plus 1000 units for families and 1000 units for affiliate colleges (Huron, Kings, Bresica). UWO is building another on-campus residence with 1000 beds for \$90M – set to open in 2013 – because to capitalize on the 60,000 high school graduates that come out of the Greater Toronto Area each year.

The new residence building under construction is being funded by revenues from other buildings around the campus that are already paid for (summer accommodations, facility rentals, etc.).

Three meetings were held to discuss on- and off-campus policing, the Off-Campus Housing Service, and City of London Bylaw Services.

Meeting 1: Michael Mics, Manager Campus Police Services (2pm, 26 October 2011)

UWO Campus Police has special constable status for its 16 officers, achieved as the result of a particular set of conditions and circumstances at various points in the University's history. Generally have the same powers as London Police Services (LPS) – can conduct investigations, issue tickets under the Traffice Act, issue fines for violation of Bylaws – and are regarded by LPS as a separate division of LPS. Campus Police jurisdiction is all of campus and 30m off campus, unless they are in fresh pursuit.

Campus Police is respected by LPS due to skill set and respected by students since they have same powers as police AND they may report back to UWO administration who may, in turn, impose behavioral contracts or academic sanctions for repeated undesirable behavior (open liquor, causing disturbance, etc.). It is not clear if or how often academic sanctions have been applied (or the legality of it) but perhaps the threat of it is sufficient to compel compliance.

Campus Police work with Administration to educate and enforce (if necessary) compliance to with the UWO Student Code of Conduct. The Code was established as part of the solution to dealing with student behavior, both on and off campus, that reached its nadir in the 1980s in which tear gas was used to break up student parties. University administration felt the incidents threatened the reputation of the University (locally and nationally) and students were concerned their degrees would be less valued due to the reputation of UWO being known more for its parties than its academic rigor. Imposed by the Board of Governors, it was agreed to by the Student Federation that agreed a change was needed. Some elements of the Code are applied to off-campus activities and behavior and all of the Code applies if those activities are official UWO or sanctioned events.

Campus Police frequently at on and some off-campus University events to provide security and oversight and may or may not work in conjunction with LPS.

Campus Police coordinates extra paid duty officers from LPS to cruise UWO neighborhood from 10pm to 3am on Fridays and Saturdays for 10 weeks out of the year, plus Thursdays on 3 or 4 weeks. The cost for extra duties is \$17k per year (this figure is at least double for OPS since they would put two officers in a cruiser – amount TBC by Matt Skof). Money for extra duties is generated generated through off-campus housing listing service run by the Off-Campus Housing Service.

Campus police also coordinate with Off-Campus Housing Service and LPS for Project Learn at the start and end of school year – 5 weeks in September and 3 weeks in April – to raise awareness of and enforce noise bylaws, liquor laws, disorderly conduct, etc. Project Learn is well received by city, too, since approximately 50% of open liquor fines are for non-students.

Budget for UWO Campus Police is \$2M per year.

For more information, please visit <http://www.uwo.ca/police/>

Meeting 2: Glenn Matthews, UWO Off-Campus Housing Services Coordinator and Marie Blosch, former President of the Broughdale Community Association (10am, 27 October 2011)

The Off Campus Housing Service has evolved over past 23 years to its current configuration, and emerged as part of the solution to address the behavior and attitudes of students living in off-campus housing, particularly in near-campus neighborhoods (like Broughdale) that have a high concentration of students.

Presently serves both UWO and Fanshawe campuses on an 80%-20% split (4 days on site at UWO and 1 day on site at Fanshawe)

It was noted that in this year, 84% of students in first year and living in residence at UWO are under the legal drinking age and three are 16 years of age.

Office is staffed with a full-time off-campus housing coordinator (Glenn Matthews), 18 student advisors, and a few other office support staff to field calls on the service line and organize materials.

The Off-Campus Housing Service (OCHS) coordinates a lot of services including

- Managing the off campus housing listings (a preferred status granted to those that are licensed) and fees collected cover the costs of the extra police officer that patrols the near-campus neighborhood. Although the OCHS would not reveal how much revenue this service generated, it is more than enough to cover the \$17k for extra duties
- Training 18 student advisors “volunteers” that go door to door and deliver 18,000 kits to ALL residents of near-campus neighborhoods about what to expect, expectations, where to call if problems, etc. They are paid a small stipend for their work (approximately \$1100 for the year).
- Receiving and managing calls from the community and students – 2000 to 2100 calls per year
 - o 7-8% are roommate issues
 - o 15% are homeowners
 - o 9-10% are landlords
 - o Rest are about landlords, maintenance, etc
- Resolving – through education – off-campus student housing issues such as noise, garbage, parking, unkempt properties and some property standards issues. The City continues to deal with building permits and zoning issues. The OCHS dispatches student advisors to engage in peer-to-peer education to resolve complaints or disputes within or against a student-occupied property. If student advisor is unable to resolve the problem, the full time off-campus housing coordinator will attend. If that fails, Community policy officer dispatched to help address the situation. Off-Campus Housing Service trains all student advisors.
- Sending monthly off-campus living e-newsletters to all students
- Setting up dumpsters in 6 locations around UWO and Fanshawe at end of each school year to collect excess household waste and coordinating a used furniture exchange right at front entrance to UWO. The UWO offers limited service to pick up garbage from houses to deliver to dumpsters. The OCHS estimates that two of the sites have full dumpster every day for the week and the other sites fill dumpster every two days. All dumpsters are situated on UWO or Fanshawe property
- Delivering mandatory training and information sessions in January to all first year students living in residence about what it means to live off campus: landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities, how to choose a house and roommates, avoiding conflict with housemates and neighbours, how to avoid fines, bylaw information, the role and services of the OCHS, etc. OCHS liaises with London Bylaw and Campus Police to help deliver information.
- Attending the Town and Gown Committee meetings.

For a complete list of what OCHS does each year, see attached PDF called “UWO Off-Campus Housing Mandate and Initiatives.”

Budget is \$330,000 year with approximately 46% coming from UWO, 40% from the City and 14% from Fanshawe (budget covers all salaries of office staff, off-campus housing coordinator, 18 student advisor stipends, overhead and printed materials for distribution).

For more information, please visit <http://offcampus.uwo.ca/>

Meeting 3: Orest Katolyk, Manager of By-Law Enforcement, City of London (2pm, 27 October 2011)

Meeting focused primarily around the subject of licensing of rental housing in London for all 4-plex units or less.

*** Note that licensing was recently appealed by property owners and upheld in Appeals Court. It is likely it will be appealed again. Until such time as court action has been resolved, the City will no license any further rental properties and will not undertake inspections or enforce compliance.***

Initiative began in 2007 at the request for more information on the matter by the City following a Town and Gown Committee meeting in which the matter was raised a possible way to improve rental housing stock for renters not just in the near-campus neighborhoods but all across the city

The rationale for 4-plex or less is that larger properties typically have some sort of property management, either living on site or coming around frequently. The decision to include all of London and not just near-campus neighborhoods was grounded in the fact that everyone in the City that lives in 4-plex or smaller rental properties would benefit.

- Oshawa, another city that introduced rental licensing, opted to focus only on licensing properties close to Durham College. It recently survived a challenge by property owners but it has been noted it creates a different standard for rental properties in the same city.

The City of London engaged in a broad education campaign and successfully defended itself against a campaign of misinformation launched by property owners.

The City meets with all rental property owners to discuss expectations of being a licensed property

What does licensing entail?

- \$25 annual fee to register each unit – registration include name, address and contact details of owner (or proxy) and a description of the property – location of property, number of units (if applicable), number of bedrooms, bathrooms, parking, etc. This information is placed on file at City Hall.
- In addition to following all standards, codes and bylaws for a property, licensed rental properties are subjected to two additional inspections:
 - o Units are subject to fire inspection once every two years; and

- Units are subject to random inspection by City once every five years to make sure they are up to code and have not undergone any illegal alterations or additions
- If a tenant has concern about their apartment or house, they are advised they can call the City to find out what is on file and/or request a city inspection
- Once the program is 100% in effect, landlords can be fined if property not up to code or not as described.
- Once the program is 100% in effect (after the legal challenges have passed), any owner renting a dwelling that is in a 4-plex or less and that is found not be licensed will be subject to a fine.

There are presently 2400 licensed units, with 600 more awaiting the legal challenges to end so they can be processed. It is expected there will be a total of 8000 licensed units in the London area.

It is understood that there will be costs associated with administering this program and inspection and enforcement but the City of London believes the payoff of an improved quality of housing stock, fewer illegal renovations, and a better understanding of where density is increasing and infrastructure and services are required will lead to fewer complaints, reduced costs associated with service requests, better quality of living and improved capacity to meet demands on infrastructure in the long term.

Other cities that do licensing include Mississauga, Waterloo and North Bay.

For more information, please visit

http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/Planning_and_Development/Land_Use_Planning/rentallicensing.htm

The following, unrelated to licensing by very relevant information, was also shared with us:

- London does not have the same 311 service we have in Ottawa. All noise complaints, etc. are sent to London Police Services after 7pm to deal with.
- In the event a call is made to the City regarding a Bylaw matter, the standard for responding to and calling the citizen back is 24-48hrs. This standard is achieved due to the greatly reduced number of calls they receive and despite having very few Bylaw Officers.
- Bylaw Services strictly enforce the “no indoor furniture outdoors” bylaw. They request that occupants remove sofas and other indoor furniture from porches, balconies and front yards and, if not removed within a certain amount of time, will remove it at the occupant’s expense.
- On the same vein, Bylaw Services will request or remove clearly not functioning barbeques, garbage, and otherwise flammable debris from porches, balconies and front yards.
- Noisy parties receive warning based not on decibel readings but on likelihood to cause a disturbance. Fines are levied if complaints are received post-warning.

For a full report of what Bylaw Services covers in London, please see attached PDF called “London MLES Initiatives”

What did we learn? In no particular order...

1. We learned that Sandy Hill does is not destined to continue its downward slide and that we – all the stakeholders in our neighborhood – have the power to bring about fundamental changes to how our community looks, grows and feels.
2. We learned that everyone we spoke with, at every meeting, agreed that the creation of an Off-Campus Housing Service and the establishment of the Town and Gown Committee has resulted in a significant decrease in complaints to the City and London Police Services, greatly improved relations between permanent and student residents in near-campus neighborhoods. UWO is seen as being cognizant and responsive to the impact its operations have on the City of London. When asked how the community would respond to UWO closing down the OCHS, the community association representative said that they would respond with “a riot.” Anecdotal evidence can be verified by requesting and examining the LPS and By-Law Services call volume records pre- and post-creation of the Town and Gown Committee and the OCHS.
3. Everyone we spoke with felt the University of Western Ontario was instrumental in the turnaround because it took a position of greater responsibility for educating and influencing student behavior off-campus. For this reason, the City regards UWO as a community partner and leader.
4. We learned that we may or may not need all of the pieces presently working together in London. Some are not possible to recreate in Ottawa. We may need more or different pieces.
5. We recognize that that the issues we face in Sandy Hill are complex and deeply rooted, and beyond the ability of a single body to repair. It is evident that there are many stakeholders that need to come together to address the issues that near-campus neighborhoods are experiencing, including the academic institutions and their student federations, relevant departments of the City of Ottawa including By-Law services, Ottawa Police Services, landlords, the office of the Fire Marshall, local businesses, affected community associations and Ward Councilors. We learned that we can all be doing more, and some need to be doing much more than others.
6. We learned that education about what it means to be a good neighbor is a huge component of the success in London. First year students are given training in residence, sent reminders by e-newsletter by the OCHS throughout the year, and benefit from peer-to-peer dispute resolution teams. Campus Police and LPS provide additional support through Project Learn in the first and last weeks of school. Non-student residents are given the same materials as students in the first weeks of school

so that everyone knows what to expect during the school year, what is acceptable, and where to go for help. Bylaws are clearly articulated and enforced. The Town and Gown Committee meets regularly to discuss concerns.

7. We learned it is essential to create a forum – such as a Town and Gown Committee – in which the issues can be examined and articulated by all key stakeholders and, once issues have been identified, solutions can be collectively addressed to create lasting change. The establishment of a Town and Gown Committee as a forum for discussing the issues of near-campus neighborhoods is required and desired.
8. We recognize that the present state of Sandy Hill currently is the result of a lot of different stakeholders not doing a whole lot for a long time. Residents have not collectively or effectively challenged the deterioration of the neighborhood. The City of Ottawa has not effectively enforced its own bylaws, has not been able to manage the unbridled conversion of family homes into student housing, and not been able to keep up with the accompanying pressure on infrastructure and services. The University of Ottawa administration has grown its student body very rapidly without much consideration of the impact that 15,000 additional students in ten years might have on the surrounding community. It is unclear what, if anything, the Student Federation at the University of Ottawa has historically contributed to championing for better student housing or encouraging good relations between students and other residents in Sandy Hill.
9. We recognize that we will achieve more success for and in our community by looking forward toward collaboration rather than backward in blame.
10. We need a change to our noise bylaw. Wording already exists that would greatly strengthen the bylaw and make it easier to charge offenders, particularly chronic offenders. The purpose is not to punish but rather correct undesirable behavior. The current practice is not working. The City of London is having much greater success with their easier-to-enforce bylaw.
11. We need to adopt the same stance on indoor furniture being used outdoors that the City of London has fearlessly employed – no tolerance. Video footage taken while driving through Broughdale – the neighborhood closest to campus and with the highest concentration of students – shows it is relatively devoid of indoor furniture on porches and balconies, as well as being largely free of garbage and other debris. When coupled with the reduction in noise complaints and other property standards issues, it suggests that strictly enforcing little things actually does contribute to an improved quality of community living overall. Video footage is available for anyone that wishes to view it. Please contact me (christopher_collmorgen@hotmail.com).
12. As an example of how rental licensing, LPS and OCHS are working together to address near-campus neighborhood issues, the following recent incident was cited: a big student party on Halloween this year led to numerous noise complaints and liquor violations at an address close to UWO. Via the complaints process, London Bylaw

Services, LPS and OCHS became involved. All three pulled their own records to gather what information they had on the address in question and this information would be used to determine the course of action:

- Bylaw Services checked to see if the unit was licensed and how many students should be living there. If there was evidence of or concern for their health and safety (seemingly many people living there, a balcony in bad repair, people on the roof, etc.) an exterior and/or interior inspection could be ordered. If there were problems, or the unit was not licensed, the property owner would be brought into the discussion. If there were no problems or the unit was already licensed and in order, then the landlord could be regarded as not necessarily (or inadvertently) contributing to the problem;
- LPS investigated the address to determine what, if any, warnings or charges ought to be laid based on past incidents, and what sort of education was required; and
- OCHS checked its own records to determine if the disturbance was a “one-off” or recurring problem and would accordingly engage either student advisors or Glenn Matthews to have discussions with the occupants about modifying behavior and/or imposing some other sanctions.

The outcome of this particular incident was not available at the time of writing but what should be noted is that three very different stakeholders were collectively engaged on the matter and all three are working together to address it in the best and most appropriate manner possible. Imagine this sort of response to chronic noise, garbage, parking or property standards violation addresses in Sandy Hill.

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