



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW GROUP HOME ON ANITA AVENUE

What is a group home?

A group home is a way to provide housing options to adults with intensive and complex care needs who are ready to move out of their childhood homes and assume more independence. These individuals require significant support, and also desire to remain in the community where they have spent their lives. The new group home will provide safe, permanent housing for these adults with disabilities.

Where will the new group home be located?

The new group home will be located at 223 Anita Avenue in Squirrel Hill, in close proximity to the JCC, the Friendship Circle, Jewish Family and Community Services, and several synagogues, as well as other neighborhood amenities including the post office, supermarket, library, and green spaces.

Who will live in this home? How long will they live there?

The group home is licensed to serve individuals who require round-the-clock care because of significant intellectual and physical disabilities. The assumption is that residents will live there permanently, as long as their needs can continue to be met.

How will a group home benefit the neighborhood?

Since the group home will be located in a residential area, people living in the neighborhood and even passing through it will gain a deeper understanding of the lives of people with disabilities and the value they bring, just as every individual brings, to the life of their community. This understanding has been shown to encourage greater acceptance of diversity, greater compassion for people of all abilities, and greater cooperation in solving local as well as global challenges that cross barriers and affect us all. The community will also benefit economically. Each group home that Verland operates brings more than \$400,000 annually to its local community in jobs and purchase of services.

Who owns the home?

The home was purchased with funds raised by The Branch (formerly known as Jewish Residential Services) and Verland; the home is owned jointly by both organizations.

Who runs the group home and what are their qualifications?

Verland employs all of the staff providing direct care and maintains the interior and exterior of the property. It is responsible for screening, training, hiring and retaining staff, and fulfilling all obligations associated with group home licensure on the local, state, and federal levels. Verland, organized in 1978, operates 48 group homes (also called "CLAs" or "Community Living

Arrangements”) located in and around Allegheny County. The homes are served by a staff of 540 and supported by three adult training facilities.

Do Verland and The Branch have any experience operating a home in Squirrel Hill?

Yes! In 2014, Verland and The Branch successfully established the Goldberg house on Shady Avenue near Solway Street. In 2021, the Solomon House on Mount Royal Road was opened. Three individuals live in each house, Verland staffs and maintains the home, and JRS helps to ensure that the residents have the opportunity to fully participate in the community.

How can we get information about the experiences of family and neighbors of the Goldberg and Solomon Houses?

If you are interested in getting in touch with family or neighbors of Goldberg and/or Solomon Houses or touring either home, please contact Alison Karabin, Project Manager for Families in Transition at The Branch, at 412.325.0039 or akarabin@thebranchpgh.org

Does staff live there?

The home is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (3 shifts a day), but employees do not live there.

Where does staff park?

The staff use the home’s garage or driveway whenever possible, but may park personal vehicles on the street from time to time.

What is the role of The Branch in the group home?

The Branch is involved in making sure residents are included in the fabric of the community by assisting with staff training related to Jewish culture, facilitating linkages with the Jewish Community Center and other Squirrel Hill organizations, and continuing to work closely with Verland’s leadership.

Can the residents have visitors?

Yes. This home operates like any other home, with residents inviting guests over for meals, etc.

Who covers the costs of operating the group home?

Generally, residents of group homes licensed for this level of care have a PA Consolidated Waiver which is designed to help individuals with intellectual disabilities access a variety of services, including housing, to support community living.

Do residents need to be Jewish?

No. The home celebrates Jewish culture, however, with a kosher kitchen, Shabbat dinners, and observance of Jewish holidays, so it is important for residents to be comfortable in this environment.

Who should neighbors contact if they have a question or concern?

Neighbors can contact Nancy Gale, Executive Director of The Branch at 412.325.0039 or Bill Harriger, President/CEO of Verland at 412.741.2375.

This home sounds like a good fit for me or someone I know. What’s the next step?

Interested parties can contact Alison Karabin, Project Manager for Families in Transition at The Branch, at 412.325.0039 or akarabin@thebranchpgh.org