



BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha®
Shri Swaminarayan Mandir

112 N Main St, Robbinsville, NJ 08561 • T: (609) 918-1212 • F: (609) 918-1111 • www.BAPS.org/Robbinsville

April 13, 2023

Hon. David L. Fried
Mayor
Township of Robbinsville
2298 Route 33
Robbinsville, NJ 08691

Dear Mayor Fried,

We write to apologize for the recent volunteer housing situation in Robbinsville, the difficulties that it has created for the town and its employees, and the unfortunate and unwanted media attention it has brought to you, the Council, and our Robbinsville neighbors and friends.

For the past 15 years, you and the Robbinsville community at large have been so welcoming and supportive as we have worked to bring the mandir into existence. And it is that long and meaningful relationship that makes us even more apologetic.

As you know, the construction of the BAPS mandir has attracted hundreds of American volunteers from across the country who wish to perform “seva” (selfless service) by helping in that important work. Most of these volunteers are college students, business owners, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and professionals. Some stay for months; others come and go and return again for a few weeks. Those who have been staying in Robbinsville during the past several months have come from across the United States. Many have flown from their home states to New Jersey alone or with friends; some have driven long or short distances to join our efforts.

BAPS traditions emphasize serving those who serve. We have nothing but awe and respect for these amazing volunteers who have put their lives on pause to be a part of something larger than themselves. They want to contribute to a project that will build bridges between Indian-Americans and the broader American community.

Given the enthusiasm of these volunteers to perform seva at our mandir, we work hard to arrange appropriate short-term housing during their stay. While most volunteers stay at the mandir or in local hotels, others have been guests of friends or relatives who are also BAPS devotees. In addition, some members of our community have offered to create communal dormitory settings on their property.



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While BAPS doesn't own the buildings provided by our devotees, there is no question that we should have been more diligent in ensuring the safety and comfort of the volunteers who have stayed there. It is against our values to place people at risk, and it was our responsibility to make sure that we did not do so. And two of the houses clearly did not meet that standard or our own expectations.

We understand that the Township's inspectors, as well as those we hired ourselves, have inspected the remaining facilities. Furthermore, we have relocated all volunteers who were staying in communal dormitory settings and continue to work with Township, state, and federal authorities to prevent this from happening again.

We are committed to reinforcing the excellent relationship that BAPS has enjoyed with the town and its leadership for all these years. We pledge to continue working together as partners to fully ensure many more years of mutual respect, warmth, and welcome.

Your Neighbors at BAPS Robbinsville,

Chandresh Patel, Mandir (Temple) Coordinator, BAPS Robbinsville

Dr. Nisha Shah, Women's Volunteer Outreach Coordinator, BAPS Robbinsville