

New Shelter 2535 Gerrard St. E. Community Bulletin 1

December 11, 2024

Sharing information with you

The City of Toronto is proposing a shelter location in your community at 2535 Gerrard St. E. Engaging with the community to determine how best to integrate it into the neighbourhood is a priority for the City of Toronto.

This is the first in a series of Community Bulletins that will be shared regularly with the community to provide updates about the shelter, outline the engagement process, and address community questions.

The new shelter at 2535 Gerrard St. E. will be one of the 20 new shelter locations opening citywide that Council has directed City staff to implement over the next 10 years as part of the [Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy](#) (HSCIS). It takes two to three years to plan, design and build a shelter. The shelter opening date for 2535 Gerrard St. E. is anticipated for 2027.

Join us for a Community Information Session

Tuesday, January 21, 2025
Birchcliff Bluffs United Church, 33 East Rd.
6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

The Information Session has two parts:

6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Drop-In Open House
opportunity to review display boards and talk with City staff

7:00 – 8:30 p.m. City Presentation & Facilitated Discussion

Please register to attend at toronto.ca/2535Gerrard

Registration is strongly encouraged (but not required) to help us understand how many people would like to attend.

Many ways to engage

The City of Toronto has retained Third Party Public to facilitate and support the community engagement process for 2535 Gerrard St. E. Third Party Public's role is not to advocate for or against the shelter, but to steward a process that supports information sharing and discussion between the community and the City of Toronto.

There are many ways to ask questions, share comments, and receive updates about this site:



Visit the project website at toronto.ca/2535Gerrard



Sign up to receive e-updates by visiting the project website



Share questions and/or comments about the project through the project website (the same link you use to sign up for e-updates)



Send an email to 2535gerrard@gmail.com



Leave a message for Third Party Public on the project voicemail at 647-370-3345



Request a meeting or discussion by phone, online or in-person



Watch for this flyer

The City is distributing flyers to all six communities with planned shelter locations, including 2535 Gerrard St. E.

Answers to questions about the shelter at 2535 Gerrard St. E.

The following questions include those most frequently asked through emails received to date at the 2535gerrard@gmail.com account.

Third Party Public has reviewed all emails and consolidated the questions here. The City of Toronto has provided the answers to the questions.

The questions have been numbered for ease of reference only and are not intended to reflect an order of priority.

Regular Community Bulletins will continue to share community questions and City responses, along with other updates from community feedback and the City's work on this project.

1. Why are new shelters needed?

The City's shelter system is currently full. Demand for shelter space continues to increase due to inflated costs of living, insufficient affordable housing supply, inadequate wage and income supports, and an increase in the number of refugee claimants arriving in Toronto. For example, in the past 10 years, the average market rent for a one-bedroom unit has increased by 57%, while the Ontario Works shelter allowance has only increased by 4%. Ontario Works provides financial assistance for Ontario residents who cannot find work, are not able to work, or they are working but making little money.

2. Why is a new shelter needed in Scarborough?

The 2021 Street Needs Assessment survey found 30% of people unsheltered outdoors were staying in the Scarborough area, highlighting the importance of increasing services there. Homelessness is experienced in all corners of Toronto and shelters are needed across the city.

3. How many people rely on shelters?

As of October 2024, the City was providing emergency accommodations to approximately 12,000 people nightly in the shelter system and in bridging hotels waiting for shelter space. On average, 225 callers to Central Intake were not matched to a shelter space each day. Demand continues to increase, and having adequate shelter space remains critical to providing a pathway for people experiencing homelessness to access housing. In 2023, more than 5,900 people experiencing homelessness moved from the shelter system into permanent housing.

You can access the City's Open Data Portal at <https://open.toronto.ca/dataset/daily-shelter-occupancy/> to see details on Daily Shelter Occupancy.

4. Why is the City buying land for new shelter sites?

The City's focus is on transitioning from an emergency COVID-19 response to a long-term proactive approach. This includes transitioning from a system with temporary shelter spaces in hotels which are not designed for shelter use and are more costly to operate, towards a system with permanent purpose-built spaces that can respond to the evolving needs of Toronto's homelessness sector.



Photo of City of Toronto Shelter Site

It is a priority for the City of Toronto to create shelters that are based on design principals that support integration of the site within the unique context of each local community in which they are located. This will also happen at 2535 Gerrard St. E.

5. Why was the community not consulted before the site was selected?

In 2017, City Council delegated authority to City staff to find and select new locations for shelters and approved a new community engagement process for opening new shelters.

In 2021, Council further authorized City staff to amend existing or enter new lease agreements to maintain or add respite or shelter beds as needed. These Council decisions have resulted in two key changes:

- City staff need to engage local Councillors on the selected site, but they do not require City Council approval to either purchase or lease it as long as the shelter site meets the shelter zoning by-law requirements and is within the approved capital budget; and
- City staff are to engage with local communities on how to best support and integrate shelters into neighbourhoods, and not on the location for the new shelters.

Why did City Council delegate decision-making authority to staff?

City Council made these decisions in an effort to depoliticize and streamline the process of creating more shelter spaces, enabling timely and more efficient response to a fast-growing homelessness crisis. This approach also supports the City of Toronto's commitment to housing as a human right and the Housing First model that recognizes that individuals without stable housing are much less likely to effectively address health, economic, and social challenges and successfully move forward with their lives.

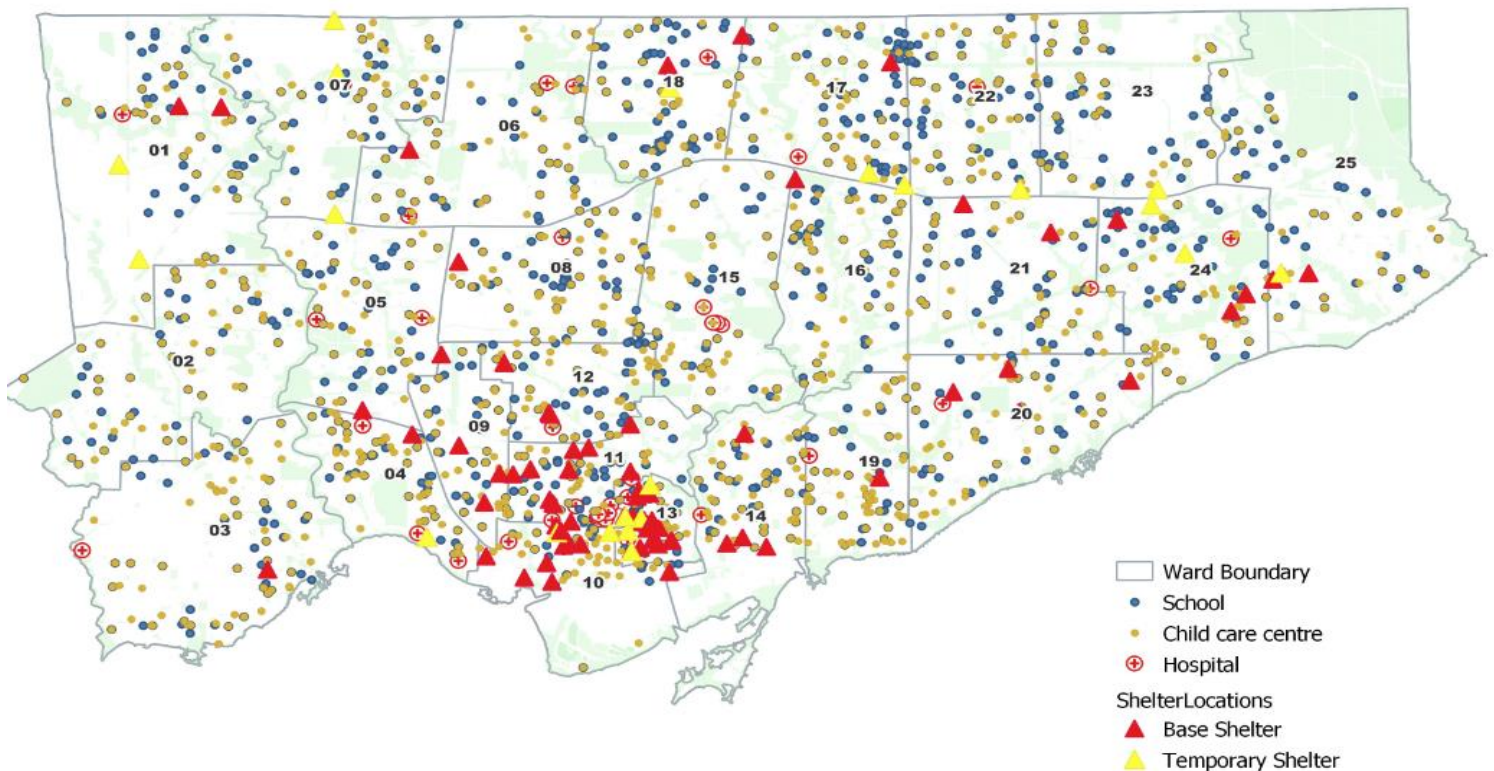
7. What criteria were used to select this site?

2535 Gerrard St. E. was selected as a shelter site because it met these criteria:

- **Size** – The site has enough square footage to support a minimum of 80 beds, which is about 20,000 square feet.

Toronto Shelter Locations and other Social Services

November 2023



Data is available on the City's Open Data Portal:
<https://open.toronto.ca/dataset/licensed-child-care-centres/>
<https://open.toronto.ca/dataset/school-locations-all-types/>

The city of Toronto has an online map of shelter locations available at:
<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/homeless-help/shelters/#location=&lat=43.635143&lng=-79.379997&zoom=13>

- **Accessibility and Public transportation** – The site is served by public transit.
- **Zoning and planning policy** – The site meets applicable zoning provisions of the zone or district. Shelters are not allowed in areas zoned exclusively for employment or industrial uses. This means the majority of shelters are in areas zoned for residential or mixed residential use.

The City is aware that a daycare and schools are near 2535 Gerrard St. E. The map on page 3 illustrates the density of daycares and schools in Toronto, creating the necessity for shelters, schools and daycares to be in close proximity.

- **Site availability, timing, and speed** – The site owner was ready and willing to sell in a timely way.
- **Financial feasibility and Suitability of building** – The City is purchasing the property based on a fair market value assessment. As part of due diligence, following a comprehensive analysis, the building was found to be in good structural condition, with the potential for renovations to make it suitable for shelter use.
- **Cost-** Following a comprehensive analysis as part of the due diligence, the site was deemed financially feasible.

8. What process was followed to apply the criteria?

The City's Corporate Real Estate Management Division and Toronto Shelter and Support Services work closely together to identify and evaluate sites through several steps:

- Site identification
- Desktop evaluation review
- Initial site visit
- Internal site assessment
- Pre-acquisition due diligence
- Negotiation and acquisition

9. What services are available to support residents of the shelter?

All shelter locations, including the potential site at 2535 Gerrard St. E., are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provide wrap-around supports and services, including meals and laundry, case managers to assist with developing permanent housing plans, harm reduction supports, and connections to mental and physical health care. All staff at Toronto shelters bring proven management practices and are trained in de-escalation, conflict resolution, and crisis prevention, intervention and management.

10. What role is there for the local community?

While site selection is not subject to community consultation, the City of Toronto knows that successful shelters have strong community engagement and are a good neighbor. City staff are keen to work together with local communities to support the successful integration of the shelter into the neighborhood.

This includes sharing up-to-date information about the shelter's planning, design, and operation; working together to address community concerns, such as safety and cleanliness; and collaborating on initiatives to support shelter residents and help them move forward with their lives.



11. How does the number of shelters in southwest Scarborough compare to other areas of the city?

There are more than 9,600 shelter beds, located at sites across Toronto. Four shelters are located in Scarborough Southwest. Some Wards have more and some have fewer.

Locations of shelters can be found in the map on page 3 and on the City's website. Some programs are not listed to support the confidentiality of people staying at the sites (e.g., sites that serve people who have experienced domestic violence). Transitional shelter programs that provide specialized programming and can only be accessed through application are also not listed.

12. Who will be served by the shelter at 2535 Gerrard St. E.?

The demographic to be served in the shelter program is adults of all genders. The City is working to confirm a service provider. Service providers are typically non-profit community-based organizations specializing in supporting people experiencing homelessness. The site will be pet-friendly, allowing pets and their owners to stay together and will feature a secured, enclosed outdoor area, providing clients with a private, open-air gathering space that would support their well-being. Referrals to the shelter program will be accessible through Central Intake.

13. How does the City address concerns about community safety?

Concerns about community safety are taken very seriously. Shelters are staffed 24/7 by individuals who are trained in de-escalation, conflict resolution, crisis prevention, intervention and management, and harm reduction services and support. All team members are trained to respond to immediate non-police or non-EMS-related matters when made aware by the community.

There is an affordable housing crisis in Toronto. When people experiencing homelessness are not staying in City shelters, the City receives concerns about their safety and well-being while

sleeping outside in tents or seeking refuge from the elements.

Increasing the capacity of the City's shelter system is one way to reduce the need for individuals to sleep in tents or on the streets, sidewalks and parks.

14. What is the overall timeline and engagement process for 2535 Gerrard Street East?

Toronto Shelter and Support Services has an Engagement Roadmap supported by Toronto City Council.

There will be three phases to engagement, including:

- **Phase 1** was implemented in September and October 2024 and included Planning & Early Engagement. Staff reviewed a long list of potential shelter properties and applied selection criteria. Whenever a location is identified, City staff brief the local Councillor. After the briefing, the location is submitted to the Deputy City Manager for approval. At this stage, City staff develop an engagement plan and retain a Community Engagement Facilitator. For 2535 Gerrard St. E, the facilitator is Third Party Public.
- **Phase 2** focuses on Active Engagement. For 2535 Gerrard St. E., this started in November 2024 and will continue through early 2027. During this phase, the focus is on sharing information and collecting feedback.
- **Phase 3** Wraps Up the shelter planning phase and transitions community engagement into an ongoing activity led by the shelter operator, often with a Community Liaison Committee (CLC) established. Regular meetings of the CLC continue as the shelter operator works together with the community on shelter integration.

The graphic on the following page summarizes these stages, along with some background informing the process.

What if my question(s) are not answered here?

Sign up on the project website to receive Community Bulletins and/or get in touch with the Community Engagement Facilitator, Third Party Public, through the project website, Gmail, or by phone – page 1 of the Community Bulletin has the contact details.

We're looking forward to hearing from you.



Engagement Road Map for 2535 Gerrard Street East

Direction from Toronto City Council

2017

Delegation of Authority

City Council authorized the Deputy City Manager to approve specific sites for shelters, provided criteria are met.

2021

Updated Engagement Process

City Council approves an improved community engagement process.

2023

Capital Infrastructure Strategy

City Council approves increasing shelter spaces by 60% across 20 new purpose-built shelters and expanding shelter system capacity by 240 beds to respond to sector-specific needs.

Sep-
Oct
2024

Phase 1: Planning & Early Engagement

Including site selection, Councillor briefing, and location approval by Deputy City Manager. City retains Community Engagement Facilitator.

Nov
2024
–
Early
2027

Phase 2: Active Engagement

Including public flyers and communications (website, email, voicemail). Collect feedback, respond to inquiries and questions, issue regular e-updates. Host information events such as Open House or Information Session.

Interested community members can sign up for a Community Liaison Committee (CLC).

City staff starts selection process of the shelter operator.

Early
2027

Phase 3: Transition of engagement responsibility to Shelter operator

2027+

Ongoing engagement with Shelter Operator

Regular meetings held with the CLC to work together with the community on shelter integration.

Target Dates* for Design & Planning Work for 2535 Gerrard St. E.

Q3 2024 – Q2 2025

Design Development

The City works with a multidisciplinary team of consultants to plan and design the new shelter ensuring all functional, aesthetic, and regulatory requirements are met.

Q2 2025

Construction

2027

Occupancy

**Disclaimer: These dates are high-level estimates and may vary as the project progresses. Actual timelines may be subject to change based on various factors throughout the development process.*

Also note that the City plans in quarters of a year that represent 3 month blocks of time. Q1 is January to March, Q2 is April to June, Q3 is July to September, and Q4 is October to December.