

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SHELTER PROJECT AT 66 THIRD STREET

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

This shelter is part of a city-wide strategy to provide critical services for people experiencing homelessness.

In December 2024, the City of Toronto announced six new shelter locations across the city. One of the new sites is at 66 Third St., which is currently a Toronto Parking Authority parking lot.

- FACT:** The City provides shelter and support to approximately 12,000 people. On average, 200 callers are turned away each night due to demand being greater than the system can accommodate.
- FACT:** Toronto's 2021 Street Needs Assessment identified a need for homeless services in South Etobicoke. About 24% of people living outdoors in Toronto in 2021 were in Etobicoke.
- FACT:** The City is working to resolve encampments by connecting people to services, shelter and housing. In 2024, 43 encampments were reduced in Etobicoke-Lakeshore.
- FACT:** City officials have delegated authority to select new shelter locations in order to respond to demand. City Council approved the overall budget and strategy in 2023.
- FACT:** The shelter at 66 Third St. will NOT be a supervised consumption service.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE NEW SHELTER AT THIRD STREET

Q: What is the anticipated timeline for this project?

A: The shelter is scheduled to open **between 2028 and 2030**. The planning and design of the building will be undertaken with the new operator once they are selected in 2025.

Q: Who will operate the shelter?

A: The City is working to confirm a service provider. Service providers are typically non-profit community-based organizations specializing in supporting people experiencing homelessness.

Q: Has it been determined who will stay at the shelter?

A: The shelter program can accommodate between **50-80 adults**, both individuals and couples, but the demographic has not yet been confirmed as designs to determine the best use of land and building types are still in development.

**QUESTIONS?
EMAIL US AT
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SITE SELECTION



Q: Why are you putting a shelter in New Toronto?

A: The new shelter at 66 Third St. is one of the first six of 20 new purpose-built shelter sites planned citywide.

City staff assessed over 100 sites across Toronto to determine if they met the City's criteria for shelter use, including 14 properties in Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

There is a need for more services in Etobicoke. The City's 2021 [Street Needs Assessment](#) highlighted that about 24% of people estimated to be living outdoors in Toronto were in Etobicoke.

The new shelter will help provide critical services and supports to people in need, many of whom may be living outdoors.

Q: What criteria did the City use to select the new shelter site?

A: To be considered as a potential new shelter service, sites must be close to transit and resources, meet minimum size requirements, and meet applicable zoning and shelter by-law requirements.

There are a limited number of available sites and areas in Toronto that meet the size, budget and zoning requirements needed to be a municipal shelter.

Shelters are typically located in residential areas, often close to libraries, schools, community centres and health care services.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONT'D

Q: What process was followed to apply the criteria?

A: CreateTO, an agency that manages the City's real estate holdings, worked with the City to conduct a thorough evaluation of each property, including site visits, to determine the best potential use. These Due Diligence steps include:

Site Identification:

Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) worked with CreateTO to review its assets and determine which sites were surplus to operational needs.

Desktop Review for Shelter Use:

City staff completed a due diligence review of the site to determine the best use. This included but was not limited to: assessing the size of the lot, zoning, estimated development costs, access to transportation and availability of other community resources in the area.

Regulatory Review:

City staff conducted an internal regulatory review with interdivisional City partners, including Planning and Toronto Buildings, to ensure the site met all applicable zoning, planning and shelter use policies and bylaws.

Additionally, the site was reviewed with the Housing Secretariat and Senior Services & Long Term Care to confirm City alignment on proposed Shelter Use.

Pre-Development Due Diligence:

Before development moves forward, additional assessments will be completed, including completion of an environmental site assessment.

Through this work, it was determined that the best potential use of the City land on 66 Third St. would be as a Municipal Shelter, under the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy. To date, four surplus TPA lots have been identified for shelter development from a list of 37 City-owned properties.

Q: Who was involved in the decision to select the 66 Third St. site? Were politicians involved?

A: City Council has delegated authority to staff to select and site individual shelters, but provides approval for the overall budget and strategy.

This was done to help accelerate and depoliticize the shelter development process, which is consistent with a human-rights based approach to housing and related services for vulnerable residents.

This ensures that the City can work quickly to respond to pressures within the shelter system and ensure that as many people as possible can access critical shelter services and support.

The decision to approve new shelter sites is not made by City Councillors or the Mayor.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONT'D

Q: Why is the parking lot being replaced to build additional shelter space?

A: In 2023, the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) reviewed its assets to determine which ones were surplus to operational needs. This process included reviewing expenses and revenues of car parks across its real estate portfolio. Through this exercise, it was determined that a number of lots were no longer required. As a result, TPA identified this location, along with several others, for the City and CreateTO to assess for City-building opportunities in line with Council priorities.

This helps reduce costs associated with developing new shelters, as there is no acquisition cost for City-owned properties. Cost-savings will also be achieved over the long term, as purpose-built shelter spaces are significantly cheaper to maintain and operate than continuously leasing temporary sites for shelter use.

Q: Are there other City shelters located close to schools or daycares? Are there other City shelters located close to senior's centres? If so, what are the experiences at those shelters?

A: The City and its operating partners have significant experience in successfully operating homelessness services in close proximity to schools and childcare facilities.

Shelters are located and successfully operated in residential neighbourhoods throughout the city of Toronto near other community services such as daycares, schools, libraries, community centres, and health care services.

An example is Fort York Residence at 38 Bathurst St., a shelter serving men that is co-located with a Child Care Centre (run by the City) with minimal community impact.

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SHELTER OPERATIONS & INTAKE

Q: How long does someone typically stay in the same shelter? Is it days or months?

A: Clients typically stay in shelters until housing or other suitable accommodations are available. New clients are only referred to a shelter when a space becomes vacant. People access shelters through Central Intake, a City-operated, 24/7 phone-based service that refers people experiencing homelessness to emergency shelters and other overnight accommodations. Central Intake also provides information about other homelessness services.

Toronto's shelter system operates on a Housing First principle. The length of a client's stay in the shelter varies depending on their unique circumstances and their housing case plan. Due to challenges in the availability of affordable housing options, more than 50% of shelter users are staying 6 months to a year as they work to secure permanent housing.

Q: What is the typical activity anticipated for this shelter? For example, will people be required to leave every morning at 8 a.m. and then line up to be allowed back in later in the day?

A: There are no requirements for clients to leave at any time of day. All shelter locations are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Staff provide programming to support their health and well-being,

and Counsellors and Case Managers work with clients to work toward their education, employment and housing goals.

People using shelter services are equal residents of the City. They may leave the shelter for a variety of reasons including employment, education and accessing services in the community. And like all Torontonians, shelter residents are expected to conduct themselves according to laws and bylaws.

Q: What services will be provided inside the shelter and on the shelter property? Who will provide those services? And how effective are those services in helping people get out of the shelter system and into housing?

A: Services are provided by the shelter operator and include:

- Three meals and snacks each day
- Access to laundry services, restrooms and showers
- Case management for all clients, with a focus on helping them to secure permanent housing and wrap-around supports.

Wrap-Around Services Include:

- Primary and Mental Health Care
- Crisis Management
- Referrals for Income Support
- Access to recreational, social, employment and academic programming.

Program details are being finalized and partner agencies may be brought into the shelter to provide the wrap-around supports as required.

The site, which will be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, will be pet-friendly, ensuring pets and owners can stay together. It will also include an enclosed outdoor area to provide clients with a private, open-air gathering space.

This comprehensive approach and service has resulted in numerous success stories where people and families have moved into permanent housing, regained stability, and started rebuilding their lives. In 2024, more than 4,300 people moved from the shelter system into permanent housing.

To learn more about client success stories, visit the City's social media channels.

Q. Many in the community are concerned about having new neighbours at the shelter who live with mental health and addiction challenges. There are concerns about behaviour that can be unpredictable and different from what they currently encounter in the community. What resources will be available at the shelter to support people living with mental health and addiction challenges?

A: The site will be staffed 24/7 by individuals who are trained in case management for housing and support, harm reduction services, de-escalation, conflict resolution, crisis prevention, and intervention and management. All team members are trained to respond to immediate non-police or non-EMS-related matters when made aware by the community. The site will also have access to a range of primary care services and mental health and harm reduction supports.

FACT: The shelter at 66 Third St. will NOT be a supervised consumption service.

Q. What is harm reduction?

A: Harm reduction is an approach and set of strategies designed to reduce substance related harm. Staff are trained in harm reduction, overdose prevention, and recognition and response. Shelter staff will also work to support clients to determine their harm reduction needs, with referrals to appropriate programs and services in the community. The shelter will not offer an urgent public health needs site or a supervised consumption site.

Q. Is the site being designed to shelter those recently released from Toronto South Detention Centre?

A: No. The site is designed to support anyone experiencing homelessness through Central Intake, a City-operated, 24/7 phone-based service that refers people experiencing homelessness to emergency shelters and other overnight accommodations.

Q. The shelter may be supervised, but what strategies ensure the area does not attract unofficial sleeping areas or encampments?

A: City staff and outreach partners work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to connect individuals living outside, including in encampments, to shelter, housing and support services. Should a member of the community see someone living outside who may need support, please call 311 and outreach staff will be dispatched to the location. Shelters like the one being proposed at 66 Third St. will provide an additional place for individuals living outside to access important services and programs.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Q. What is the City's approach to Community Engagement?

A: The City is committed to engaging the community to support the program's success – both for the individuals who will be staying there and the surrounding community.

Community engagement is a crucial component to supporting the successful integration of new shelters into the neighbourhood.

The community engagement process includes communicating details about the shelter development process, responding to community inquiries and concerns, improving public understanding of shelter development, and providing ongoing shelter updates.

Q. What role is there for the local community?

A: While site is not subject to community consultation and approval, the City knows that successful shelters have strong community engagement and are a good neighbour.

City staff are keen to work together with local communities to support the successful integration of the shelter into the neighbourhood.

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.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONT'D

Q: How can we stay informed? Can the community contribute to shelter success?

A: As the shelter starts operations, information will be shared about volunteer opportunities, donations needed and other ways community organizations can help support the operator and clients.

A Community Liaison Committee will be created to provide a forum for representatives from the local community to meet regularly with representatives from the City and operator to share information, ask questions, and work together to problem-solve community concerns.

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