



City of Toronto

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSION

New Shelter at 2535 Gerrard Street East

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

Birchcliff Bluffs United Church, 33 East Road

Drop-In/Open House from 6 – 7 p.m., Town Hall from 7 – 9 p.m.

SUMMARY

Over 350 people participated in a Community Information Session hosted by the City of Toronto on Tuesday, January 21, 2025. This included just over 200 people in-person at Birchcliff Bluffs United Church and another 150 people that joined online to watch the meeting via livestream.

The Community Information Session was facilitated by Third Party Public, the organization that also wrote this feedback summary. A draft of this summary was distributed to participants for their review before being finalized. Four participants shared suggested edits and updates have been made by Third Party Public in consultation with the City of Toronto Shelter and Support Services staff team. Responses to questions asked through the online chat have been added by the City of Toronto.

The City of Toronto will post the summary to the www.toronto.ca/2535Gerrard website.

Quick Glance of Feedback

- Concern and frustration dominated the meeting. Most participants said that they do not think 2535 Gerrard St E is an appropriate location for a shelter, for either shelter residents (due to lack of services in the area) or the surrounding neighbourhood (due to safety concerns). They expressed doubts and a lack of confidence in the City's shelter siting process.
- There were a few participants who expressed support for the shelter.
- Over the course of the discussion, many described themselves and their community as compassionate, caring, and concerned about the homelessness crisis, with several saying that the extreme cold on the night of meeting (it was about -20 degrees) was a reminder of how important it is to help those experiencing homelessness.

Opening Remarks & City Staff Presentation

Introductory comments from Councillor Parthi Kandavel and Gord Tanner, General Manager of Toronto Shelter and Support Services, are written in the first person to most closely reflect the remarks as delivered.

Councillor Parthi Kandavel opened the meeting, welcomed participants, and shared opening remarks. Some of the key points covered by the Councillor included:

- Thanks to everyone for coming out on a cold night. We had our coldest night of the year last night and it's a time to reflect on the need for shelters. At the same time recognizing that many in this room have the privilege of going home tonight and every night to a warm bed.
- This is a complex and sensitive conversation, and an opportunity to have your voice heard. How do we govern ourselves is the bedrock of any society. Tonight, we have senior City staff with tremendous responsibility and leadership along with myself, as the elected official, to hear directly from the community.
- Civic engagement and democratic participation are fundamental to how business is done with any level of government. It is very important to have your voice heard. I know everyone here will be respectful during the Town Hall portion of the agenda.
- We are seeing an unprecedented need for shelters. This is also the case across Ontario. A recent report was released by AMO (Association of Municipalities of Ontario) describes this need – not just in the City of Toronto but across all towns and cities.
- We're seeing a rise, post-pandemic, with issues related to mental health, housing insecurity, and drug use. There is a need to address these issues and help meet the needs of vulnerable people.
- This is clearly a complex issue and it's important we all recognize this. There is not an easy "for" or "against" position to take. There is

a tremendous amount of thought that needs to go into how we do this. Particularly, what are the criteria for success? That's why we are in the room today.

- This is something our community knows very well. Scarborough Southwest has four shelters, which is the second most in any of the City's suburban wards. All of them are on major arterial roads with access to key services like transit, health care, and amenities which have been crucial to their success. And we are here today to address that.
- This is a caring and compassionate community. In our ward, not far from here, construction is underway on Ontario's first and Canada's second healing lodge for formerly incarcerated Indigenous women. Many of you were in the room many years ago when that controversy came, and we all accepted it and its being built.
- I want to underscore that we've had these conversations before and this is not a NIMBY thing. This is about being considerate and thoughtful and recognizing critical criteria. I want to dispel the myth that the voices of community are about being NIMBY – it's not. It is about being thoughtful and considerate about what are the criteria for success for not only for residents of the shelter but for the community as well.
- We saw this in December when the City announced the six new shelter sites. Five of the six (all except 2535 Gerrard Street East) are on major arterial roads and one is directly across from a major Toronto hospital with the breadth and depth of services required for our most vulnerable citizens.
- I've given my full support to senior City staff and the Mayor's office to continue working on this question. Given its complexity, it's an evolving conversation. There are ways to address what is best for the shelter residents and the community. We have been part of the solution before and we will be part of this solution.
- Finding the right location is what's paramount for our community and for our city. This is not only about Gerrard. It's about setting up the rest

of the city for success in how we locate shelters and what criteria do we use that sets the location up for success.

- Other municipalities look to Toronto and how we deal with a variety of complex issues, whether that be housing or transit. This conversation will lead to criteria that will be shared and accessed across the province.
- I know we're all here to have a respectful conversation and we'll be listening attentively to everyone's voice. I know tonight will be a constructive and productive night as this conversation evolves.

Gord Tanner, General Manager of Toronto Shelter and Support Services, followed the

Councillor with an introduction to the City staff team working on the 2535 Gerrard Street East shelter site (see Attachment 1 for the meeting agenda).

Gord's remarks included:

- Thanks to Councillor Kandavel for highlighting the very serious nature of the issues we are here to discuss. And thank you for coming.
- This is one of the coldest nights we've had in several years in the city. It's a night where we scramble to open up enough warm space for people to come indoors.
- As I go to sleep tonight and wake up tomorrow morning, I hope that we do not hear any bad news with respect to, unfortunately, the hundreds of people that still remain outside in our parks, in our transportation right-of-ways, under bridges, and in other places.
- In doing this work for over 20 years, I've stood at the front of many rooms like this and engaged in conversations with residents, local neighbours, stakeholders, and business owners about the services that we provide and the critical importance of those services and what they're all about.
- Tonight, our team will walk through a presentation and talk about how this site was identified, why staff chose this site, and what the services will be at the site. Then we will open it up for conversation and questions.

- We are opening shelters in residential neighbourhoods right across the city. Just recently, we announced plans to open 20 new shelters across Toronto in every Ward. This Ward has stepped up with some groundbreaking programs that deliver services that support vulnerable people.
- We are very committed to making sure that the project we're working on here, is customized and state of the art. It's going to make an incredible difference to hundreds, if not thousands, of people that will come through the doors over the next many years.
- I want to let you know this is the beginning of a conversation which will continue between the City and the community for some time. We're very committed to ongoing conversations with community members and stakeholders as the planning for this project continues. Thank you for being here and thank you to the folks that are online.

Following Gord, City staff presented 21 slides (see Attachment 2) that provided an overview of the City's shelter system, reviewed the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS), the real estate strategy used when identifying sites for new shelters, shelter design and technical guidelines, shelter operations, community engagement, and a tentative opening for the 2535 Gerrard Street East shelter in early 2027.

Perspectives from Community-Based Organizations

Following City staff's presentation, there were four leaders from the local community who had responded to an open opportunity for local resident and community-based organizations to have 5 minutes on the agenda to speak on behalf of the people they represent. They included:

Blantyre/Hunt Club Resident Association (Dr. Andrew Petrosniak) shared:

- He is speaking on behalf of the over 1,200 people who signed a petition voicing their concerns that this is not the right location for the shelter. The Association recognizes the diversity of views in the neighbourhood, and his remarks represent the views that have been shared with the Association.
- People are troubled by the process of site selection and by the community impact.
- As an emergency physician at a downtown inner city hospital, Andrew takes care of folks experiencing homelessness, sometimes permanently and many times transiently. His hands help people heal.
- There is one patient, Sam (not his real name, the circumstances have been slightly changed to maintain his privacy), who came to the emergency department with a leg wound that was treated. The wound also needed adequate care after leaving the hospital or else it could get infected. Sam said that he didn't know how he would get that care since he doesn't have a family doctor or access to nursing care. He sometimes stays on the street. Sam also didn't have an OHIP card. Imagine trying to get an OHIP card without a house. With a shelter at 2535 Gerrard Street East, it's unclear how Sam would get the things he needs.
- We heard from staff that there are a limited number of locations that meet the size, budget, and zoning requirements needed for a municipal shelter. We heard that money and

zoning as key metrics, but we're talking about is people.

- We have also heard that the City deliberately does not engage the community in site selection, and that the process is shrouded in secrecy. So much so that the Mayor called out the Councillor for a breach of confidentiality when he identified the site.
- A CAMH report came out last year that studied the violence and critical incidents within the shelter system. It showed that over the course of 10 years, there was a 426% increase in violence and critical incidents within the shelters.
- We believe this site is inadequate. It will not benefit someone like Sam. It will not benefit the wide spectrum of those who unfortunately experience homelessness both transiently or permanently.
- As a community, we can do better. As a city, we can do better.

Beach United Lunch Program (Paul Dowling) shared:

- He is a member of the Beach United Church and is speaking on behalf of several volunteers in the community lunch program that's delivered by several churches in the area that provide lunch to people in our neighbourhoods.
- The lunch program provides a nutritious meal for neighbours that live on limited income. It also provides a place for people that live alone and are isolated to connect with each other in a social setting. Through the program, volunteers have a chance to know many of the regular guests and the lives they lead. They're decent people like you and me, that we know by name.
- In the current crisis of affordable housing, many guests are challenged to maintain stable housing. People who live on social assistance or who are precariously employed struggle to meet the increasingly high cost of housing. A single person receiving income support through Ontario Works gets \$390 a month for rent and a couple would receive \$640. You can't rent any kind of housing for that money.

- Some people can get by. They go to the food bank and they eat at the lunch program. We also know that some of our guests have lost the struggle for affordable housing and are now living outdoors. In warmer weather they sleep in parks, but on days like today or last night, they must try to find a place to keep warm – sitting in Tim Hortons all day or riding the TTC. They might find a couch to sleep on for a day or two, or sometimes they just walk around all night trying to keep warm.
- A couple of days ago, a person came to the program and said he is sleeping outside with a plastic sheet and a couple of sleeping bags. It is painful to know that they have no place to sleep at night that's warm.
- We know solutions to the housing crisis include fixing our inadequate income support system, developing a range of affordable and supportive housing, and advocating to all levels of government to provide the funding that's needed for the decent housing people need. But in the short term, we need to support the development of decent shelters in all our communities so that our neighbours are not sleeping outdoors in tents.
- Our focus is on how we, as neighbours, can help the City to welcome residents into this new shelter. We need to talk with the City and the shelter operator to find out what would be helpful – whether by providing clean used clothing, providing support from local alcoholics anonymous and addictions services, connecting with local clergy, or providing special meals. We also focus on how we can help our neighbours overcome the fears they may have about shelter residents and other people that experience homelessness. Let's join together in welcoming people into our community and making this a welcoming community for everyone.

Quarry Plaza Business Owners (Dr. Katchky on behalf of Teach Me to Fly Preschool, Beach Hill Smokehouse, The Quarry Pharmacy, The Quarry Café, and The Quarry Dental) shared:

- The Quarry Village Plaza is at 2560 Gerrard Street East, essentially across from 2535 Gerrard Street East.
- His professional work experience as a staff dentist at the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, now known as CAMH. He serviced the community with mental health issues and learned that, sadly, homelessness and mental health issues and substance use disorders are often intimately intertwined.
- He also learned that CAMH became a hub as a gathering place within and outside the building. It was in an area of Parkdale with many low rise and low rental cost apartments. Patients with mental health issues would often be in-patients for a while, and then out-patients in the community – moving back and forth between the two.
- Homeless shelters are also hubs. The difference on Gerrard Street East is that the surrounding community here does not at all resemble the multiple low rise units on Queen West. I can't picture how it would work here.
- During the pandemic, the lands immediately to the west of the plaza, known as the Quarry Lands and which are presently under early stages of development, became a small encampment likely because of a more acute shortage of beds due to pandemic restrictions on spacing and utilization of existing shelters. It became problematic for our plaza. The outdoor play area used by the Teach Me To Fly daycare was used as a showering facility by people in the encampment. This is not acceptable.
- Despite what was shared by City staff related to the selection of this site, it appears that ease of land acquisition was the only criterion used.

St. Nicholas Anglican Church (Reverend Andrew MacDonald, Parish Priest) was joined in-person and online by parishioners from St. Nick's, and shared:

- St. Nicholas Anglican Church is just a block east of Birch Cliff, with many parishioners involved in justice and outreach ministry in our parish. He also spoke as a resident of the Hunt Club neighbourhood, where he has lived with his wife and daughter for four years.
- For more than 20 years, St. Nick's has been on the frontline of social justice ministry in this neighbourhood. Year round, they support people who live on the margins, and on the edge of poverty, and they're all people who live right here in Birch Cliff. For decades, we've seen and served on the frontlines of the crowding crises of housing, food insecurity and marginalization, right around us. These aren't abstract issues isolated to pockets of the city; they're affecting our neighbours, people who live around us, right on our own doorstep.
- The shelter is not introducing a new problem to the neighbourhood but instead is providing a response to something that is already here. It's going to give people that are most in need of support a place to be that isn't the street, or a tent on the Quarry Lands, or a doorstep.
- Temporary shelter facilities are a stepping stone to permanent housing, especially when they provide meals, stability, and predictability; and have counsellors, health and wellness services and resources – such as proposed for this site.
- As people of faith, we support the City's plans for this shelter. As a city made up of neighbourhoods and villages, no proposed location for a shelter is ever going to be far from a school, or a park, or a library, or a daycare, or a neighbourhood.
- The question isn't whether there is a need, but how we are able, out of our own privilege and abundance, to respond compassionately to a growing crisis that's right in our neighbourhood, where this is happening.

Town Hall

Following the remarks from the four resident and community-based organizations, the meeting transitioned into the Town Hall part of the agenda. From 8:15 – 8:55 p.m., there were two concurrent streams of activity happening:

- In-person, there were three cordless mikes that were moved around the room by the facilitation team to participants who raised their hands to speak.
- At the same time, online participants had the opportunity to provide feedback using the chat function (see Attachment 3). The City of Toronto is committed to answering these questions. Some answers may have been provided in the December 2024 Community Bulletin and/or the January 2025 E-Update. Any new questions will be answered in future E-Updates related to the 2535 Gerrard Street East shelter site.

There was time for 15 individuals to speak during the Town Hall. 12 speakers expressed concern about the shelter and 3 speakers expressed support.

The following topics and themes emerged throughout the plenary discussion and written submissions. They are numbered for ease of reference only. Questions and comments focusing on similar themes have been combined to avoid repetition. Note that responses from City of Toronto staff, where provided, are written *in italics*.

1. Concern about the location, site selection criteria, and process

Many were concerned about the location of the shelter and the criteria that led the City to select the site. There was also concern about overall decision making related to the site selection process. Specific comments and questions included:

- **Interest in understanding the City's site selection criteria**, including the extent to which the City considered things like: proximity to parks (like Blantyre Park), ease of access to the Bluffs (via Warden Avenue), proximity to an LCBO, proximity to schools,

daycares, and new development (specifically the new development on the quarry lands), frequency of TTC service and proximity to rapid transit, the nature of the community as a “child-based” place, and the availability of wrap-around supports for shelter clients in the community. These participants said that, had the City considered these factors, it would have not concluded that 2535 Gerrard Street East was a good location for a shelter.

The City said that its site selection process is limited by zoning, saying it needed to site shelters in areas with appropriate zoning which is often in residential areas. City staff added that many shelters run successfully in residential communities throughout Toronto, including several that are immediately next to daycares.

Note added by City of Toronto staff after the meeting: *Shelters can be sited in any area it is permitted by zoning and by-law, which includes (but is not limited to) residential zoning.*

- **Frustration with the narrowness of the City’s site selection criteria.** Participants were frustrated that site selection appeared to have been driven solely by money and zoning. Some said focusing on existing zoning was unnecessarily limiting since, as the regulator of zoning, the City has the power to change it if it wants to. For example, the City could change the zoning of employment areas to allow shelters. Participants said that, if the City really saw homelessness as an emergency, it would find a way to change zoning quickly to enable shelters in more locations, including places that would be better than this one.

The City responded that it has policies to protect employment lands from conversion to residential uses to protect spaces for jobs and to support the City’s economic growth. Changing employment area zoning to residential zoning would allow uses beyond shelters, such as condos or other residential uses, which could erode the amount of

employment lands. Finally, City Council directed staff to site shelters as fast as possible given the severity of the homelessness crises, lack of available shelter beds, and the high cost to operate shelters in hotels. Locating a shelter in Employment Areas in the City’s Official Plan is a lengthy process with uncertainties such as unlikely support by City staff and potential to not be approved by City Council. As a result, staff decided not to spend resources pursuing or purchasing sites where they might be denied permission to build a shelter.

Note added by City of Toronto staff after the meeting: *Redesignating employment areas under the Official Plan to allow for residential uses is a lengthy and complex process and the need is weighed against other planning priorities and is not guaranteed to be approved. There is also a risk that a decision could be appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal and a decision in favour is not guaranteed.*

- **Concern about secrecy and a lack of transparency in the process.** Participants said the process seemed to have been designed to keep the community out of decision making. They said that, with the property already acquired and staff statements that “the shelter is coming,” the community engagement process is a “formality” and “just for show.” They added that the City’s secrecy about the selection of the site did not inspire confidence or trust from the community and that, for some, the process was “hostile” and “divisive.” Some said the City should make its site selection process public, including which sites the City considered and ruled out (and why).

The City said that Toronto City Council delegated decision making about shelter site selection to City staff, adding that staff don’t release information about potential sites before they have purchase agreements in place since sharing that information publicly can affect negotiations and the price of the property. The City

added that it announced the first selected sites to the public when it had firm deals in place. The City is committed to engaging the community about how to make the site successful, including listening to feedback about concerns community members may have. This is what the community engagement process is about.

2. Concern about the shelter, especially community impacts and safety

Several participants shared concerns about the shelter's impact on the community, especially safety, particularly given the number of families and children in the area. Specific concerns were:

- Illegal or dangerous activities spilling out from the shelter into the community, such as drug use and violence. Some mentioned the spillover of violence at the South Riverdale Community Health Centre safe injection site in Leslieville, which resulted in the death of a young mother with two young children. They were very concerned the shelter could lead to similar tragedies here.
- There is already illegal drug use in and around the community — one participant had recently found used needles at the Bluffs — and the shelter could lead to more dangerous paraphernalia in public spaces.
- The potential for public displays of drug use, sex, and violence. One participant said they had read a story in the media about school janitors receiving training to pick up needles, condoms, and excrement after a shelter opened in Montreal.
- An increase in crime due to the presence of those with addictions and mental health challenges.
- The lack of sufficient police resources or capacity to manage community impacts.
- The shelter might be able to provide safety as long as its clients are in the building, but once clients leave the building to go into the community (to get groceries, for example), the risks to the community go up. Other than

what was shared in the presentation already, what is the City going to do to make sure our community is safe, our residents our safe, and our children are safe?

Toronto Shelter and Support Services shared recognition that there is a lot to be done to build the community's trust and to ensure the shelter is successful. Safety and security at a shelter depends on the shelter program and what the City anticipates. Many shelters have successfully opened across the city.

There are other teams in the City responsible for safety, said Scott McKean, the Associate Director of Community Safety and Well-Being for the City of Toronto. The SafeTO team is partnering with Toronto Shelter and Support Services in building the necessary relationships to address concerns.

It's important to draw a distinction between the terrible incident that happened at the South Riverdale Community Health Centre and what this meeting is about. The South Riverdale Community Health Centre is not a City-run facility. There's a very different infrastructure that supports shelters coming into communities. Our Division also works closely with Toronto Police Services with a dedicated Inspector from TPS that works with us to assess these situations and mobilizes internally to work with local Division and their Command. This is new with the SafeTO work I'm leading. Two things are important, including community liaison and governance, as well as ongoing dialogue between Toronto Shelter and Support Services and the many other Divisions involved in making shelters successful outside of the building, in addition to the great work that's happening inside the shelter.

- **What specifically will the City do to ensure the safety of community members, especially children?** The shelter must be safe and secure. *The City said that safety supports differ from shelter*

to shelter and vary based on the complexity and size of the shelter. For more complex sites, Toronto Shelter and Support Services has community safety teams who pick up needles, but that service isn't needed for many sites. Toronto Shelter and Support Services partners with SafeTO and police to ensure we are working with the community to achieve safety and wellbeing. Through the SafeTO team, the City has multiple safety supports to draw on, including a dedicated Toronto Police inspector who assesses risks and mobilizes a team with the local police division.

3. Support for the shelter

Some participants said they were supportive of the shelter, including some that identified as area residents. Perspectives shared by these participants included:

- Concern that an attitude of “not in my neighbourhood” could lead to fewer shelters, giving people who badly need emergency housing no place to go. If we're not offering shelter spaces to people who need it, where are they supposed to go?
- While the City's shelter siting process and selection criteria look flawed, every process is going to be flawed: if we wait for a perfect process and perfect criteria, nothing will get done. One participant said that TTC shelters are being turned into homes, and a homeless woman who lived in a parking lot near Danforth and Coxwell recently died outside. She was known in the community and her death could have been prevented.
- If the shelter can't go here, where should it go? If it can't happen now, when should it happen? No matter where the City proposes a shelter, people will be unhappy.
- Building shelters can increase community safety and property values — it is the visible presence of homeless people in communities that makes people feel unsafe and that hurts property values.
- The City's shelter system is already overflowing, affecting the whole city. When

the City builds new shelters, it provides value to all of Toronto.

4. Questions and comments about integrating the shelter into the community

Participants asked questions about what kinds of efforts the City would make to integrate the shelter into the community and to give the community a role and voice in that integration process. Specific questions and suggestions were:

- **With respect to operation of the shelter, what input and involvement will the community have in the governance of the shelter? Given that safety is a large concern, I truly believe that any governance of the shelter should include ongoing community input; should include tracking and communication of crime and civil disturbance data; and should include a regular audit of the operation of the centre. Can someone let me know how the community will be involved in the governance of the shelter?**

One of the things we try to do early on before a shelter even opens is to start a Community Liaison Committee (CLC). This is a group of dedicated neighbours who discuss risks they see, what their concerns are, and work together to try and solve those issues. The purpose of the CLC is not related to governance of all aspects of the shelter. It focuses on issues related to things like safety, engagement, communication and the things community members care about. We work on a continuous basis together to address those issues, and the CLC continues for as long as required to continuously support the success of that shelter site. The Toronto Shelter and Support Services team may also invite other City Divisions to participate on the CLC to ensure problems are addressed proactively and to ensure community input is used to make change.

In terms of shelter operations, Toronto Shelter and Support Services has a Good Neighbour policy which is founded on the principles of us working jointly together in addressing some of the neighbourhood concerns.

In terms of governance, we have Agency Review Officers and Housing Consultants that work along with providers to help ensure governance is being maintained and supported, and when there are areas of conflict, to help the provider address those concerns.

Notes added by City of Toronto staff after the meeting:

The City of Toronto has a team in place to ensure oversight of the operations of shelters and adherence to Toronto Shelter Standards. Agency Review Officers and Housing Consultants are members of that team. Toronto Shelter Standards are online (see this [link](#)).

TSSS and the shelter can action items directly related to the shelter operation and connect to other Divisions and the police as needed to address broader community development issues.

- **In a follow-up, the following question was asked: “From a governance perspective, do you believe that as stakeholders, a member or members of the community should be involved in the governance of the shelter, either from its inception to delivery or in its ongoing operation? It is a yes or no question, are we, as stakeholders, involved in the ongoing governance?”**

The City response to the question was “No. The provider is an organization that has governing bodies within them, and we support them to engage with the community.”

- **Referring to the Safe Injection Site at the South Riverdale Community Health Centre**, one participant said that they had heard similar promises about a role for the

community and the addressing of issues at a Safe Injection Site, but that the promises did not pan out. For example, the police were not involved (since the safe injection site did not want police around), illegal activities were tolerated, and the Community Liaison Committee was filled with supporters of the site.

- **If there is Community Liaison Committees or a similar group for this shelter, it must include local community representation, not just hand-picked members who are likely to support the shelter and disregard community concerns.** Its meetings should be open and public.
- **Would the City look at providing more frequent TTC bus service on Gerrard Street East?** *The City said that it would take this question as a suggestion and explore if TTC service could be increased. It added that, for another shelter, the City worked with TTC to relocate a bus stop and adjust service, and that it would look at doing something similar here if it would help with integration.*
- **Why did the City not site the shelter on under-used City-owned lands like the abandoned property at 2334 – 2336 Gerrard Street East or the parking lot at Warden Subway Station?** *Given the \$7,000,000 price the City paid for 2535 Gerrard Street East, people should understand why the City didn’t instead use one of these sites. The City said that it did not have information on hand about 2334 – 2336 Gerrard Street East, but that it would find and provide details as soon as possible. Finally, the City said that Council directed staff to look at both purchasing private sites and using City-owned sites: four of the six sites announced in December are on City-owned lands.*

Note added by City of Toronto staff after the meeting:

The City undertook an extensive review of its portfolio to identify vacant and

underutilized properties that could be developed under the HSCIS program, resulting in 4 City-owned sites announced to meet the program requirements for 2024.

The City continues to review owned properties to determine whether sites meet the program requirements, with a specific focus on siting considerations and ability to meet the program's milestones to bring new shelters online. 2336 Gerard is owned by the City but is subject to a lease to a third party, limiting the City's ability to redevelop the site within the program's timelines.

However, staff will continue to assess many different City-owned sites as the program advances to ensure we prioritize opportunities on existing City property.

- **What is the ratio of wrap-around supports to shelter clients? If it's one support person to 80 clients, that's likely not enough support.** *The City said it works to ensure appropriate supports are brought in – the number and type of supports is based on clientele, such as whether the clientele needs medical supports, for example. Three meals a day will be provided. Finally, the City shared that while many people experiencing homelessness suffer from mental health and addiction, these aren't the only things that lead to homeless. Some shelter residents are low income, some have been evicted from their homes, and some are refugees.*

Note added by City of Toronto staff after the meeting:

Toronto Shelter and Support Services brings services into shelters, as needed, including medical supports. has a partnership with Inner-City Health Associates (ICHA) who are present at shelter sites to provide clients with primary health care as well as make referrals to specialists for things like mental health and addictions treatment. The shelter will bring services for the clients to the community to ensure they are supported including things like case management counsellors.

- **Since shelters aren't a long-term solution to homelessness, why didn't the City put the money it spent on this site towards developing more permanent housing?** *The City said that it agrees that permanent housing for Torontonians is its ultimate goal: there is a continuum of housing the City is striving to provide to address homelessness and shelters are part of the housing continuum that help people move into permanent housing.*
- **Given that this is a family-based community, why is this not a family shelter with space for women and children?** *The City said there are several reasons for why this shelter wasn't identified as a family shelter, including: (i) There is very high demand for mixed adult shelters; (ii) Part of the City's Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy requires the City to close its pandemic-era shelter hotels over the next five years (these shelters are primarily serving mixed adults, so the City needs to ensure it is providing beds and supports for users of those shelters); and (iii) Family shelters have unique design considerations that require a much larger site than this one.*
- **Does the City have any statistics on how shelters affect property values?** *Some are very concerned that the shelter is going to decrease property values. The City said that, no, it does not have statistics on property value impacts, but that it can look at undertaking a study on this as there has been increasing interest in this data.*
- **What is the Councillor's position on this shelter? Does he support it?** *Councillor Kandavel said that he supports revisiting the site selection process and defining what the criteria are for successfully siting a shelter. He added that he doesn't think this shelter meets the criteria that have led to other successful shelters, such as being located by a highway or near a hospital.*

Closing Remarks and Next Steps

Nicole Swerhun, Meeting Facilitator, thanked people for their participation and committed to sending a draft of the feedback summary to participants for their review before finalizing.

Councillor Kandavel then delivered closing remarks, sharing the following points. Note that these are captured in the first person to most closely reflect the remarks as delivered.

- Tonight was clearly a conversation about governance, accountability, and the lack thereof.
- We heard tonight from folks in the Beach. And everyone is welcome here, but I want to point out this Ward has four shelters and is welcoming with open arms a healing lodge for formerly incarcerated Indigenous women. Beaches East York folks have one shelter in their ward, along a major transit line next to a subway, amenities, and services. So please hold off on telling us that we're not compassionate and we're not caring when your neighbourhood is one of the most privileged and least dense neighbourhoods.
- We started this meeting acknowledging that there's no question we need shelters. It's a calm, thoughtful, resourceful discussion on how they are best placed. This is where the accountability portion of this discussion is critical.
- We heard and saw clearly that it's zoning and money that drives the criteria. That's unacceptable.
- We heard clearly that this delegated authority [from City Council to City staff to site shelters] is problematic when people who don't live in the neighbourhood and don't represent the community are making significant decisions without consultation. It leads to problems that could have been avoided.
- Thank you for those who thoughtfully shared their experience in South Riverdale, and what sadly and unfortunately transpired. It tells us the

tremendous diligence that needs to happen going forward.

- The accountability piece is critical. We heard that "we don't rezone Employment Lands", but massive swaths of Scarborough have just been rezoned for density ranging from 40-58 storeys along the Golden Mile, Scarborough Junction, and now at 375 Kennedy. In comparison, this facility we're talking about is only 20,000 square feet. There's incredible precedent for this, and this reflection will be part and parcel of our community's voice to the City and to Council and the Mayor about this site.
- We heard about a site not far from here in Beaches East York, 2334 Gerrard Street East, which the City will follow up on. To hear that this is the only site in Scarborough that was available, it tells us more work needs to be done.
- I want to underscore this for folks in the room that think we are just against the shelter. that we are not just against the shelter. That's not the case at all. We all recognize that tonight of all nights, is an acute reflection of the harm, the need, and the impact that a lack of services creates. We know our privilege. We go home to a warm bed at night, we recognize this. This is about doing it well, doing it right, and abiding by consistent criteria that we've applied in other locations.
- My role is very clear. My accountability is not just to the community but it's to fairness, to consistent criteria, and it's to acknowledging the need across the city.
- As we heard, this is an ongoing conversation. I will take staff at face value that this is not just about the site and its services, but the location itself. There has to be diligence – we saw the gaps tonight. I feel assured that work will continue with staff to recognize and site the right location, whether it's on our ward or outside the ward. We've always welcomed vulnerable folks in our community. And my commitment is to ensure fairness and consistency in the rationale applied to this decision as it proceeds in the coming weeks and months. Thank you.

Attachment 1. Agenda

New Shelter 2535 Gerrard St. E. Community Information Session

Updated Agenda

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

Birchcliff Bluffs United Church, 33 East Rd.

6:00 - 7:00 pm – Open House

7:00 - 9:00 pm – Presentation, Community Feedback & Town Hall

Option to join via Zoom by clicking [here](#) (7:00-9:00 pm only)

6:00 PM	Open House All
7:00	Introductions and Agenda Review Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator, Third Party Public
7:05	Welcome from Councillor Parthi Kandavel
7:10	Presentation City of Toronto
7:40	Community Feedback Perspectives from resident and community-based organizations (5 min each): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hunt Club/Blantyre Resident Association• Beach United Lunch Program• Quarry Plaza Business Owners• St. Nicholas Anglican Church
8:00	Town Hall
8:45	Next Steps & Closing Remarks Nicole Swerhun, Third Party Public City of Toronto
9:00 PM	Adjourn

Meeting purpose

The City of Toronto will be locating a shelter at 2535 Gerrard St E.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Provide more information about the new shelter at 2535 Gerrard St E, including how the site was selected, what kind of shelter is being planned, and how local communities will continue to be engaged
- Answer questions and understand perspectives and concerns from the community
- Start a discussion about how to best integrate the new shelter successfully into the community.

How to give feedback



Please send written feedback to 2535gerrard@gmail.com or leave a voicemail at 647-370-3345



Attachment 2. Slides presented by the City at the meeting

2535 Gerrard St. E. Community Information Session


Tuesday, January 21, 2025
6:00 PM to 9:00 PM
Birchcliff Bluffs United Church – 33 East Rd.




0

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the land we are on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.



Toronto is built on sacred land that is part of an agreement between Indigenous peoples and then extended to allied nations to peacefully and respectfully care for it. By personally making a land acknowledgement you are taking part in an act of reconciliation, honouring the land and Indigenous heritage, which dates back over 10,000 years.

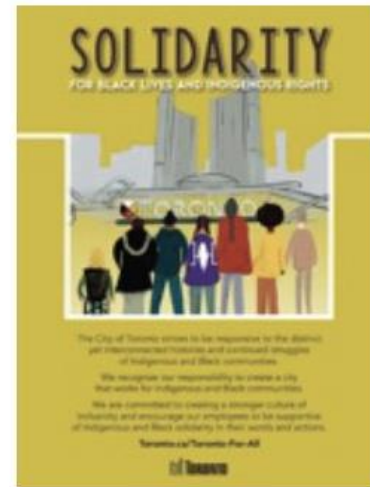


1

African Ancestral Acknowledgement



The City of Toronto acknowledges all Treaty people—including those who came here as settlers as migrants either in this generation or in generations past- and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.



City of Toronto Shelter System Overview

Loretta Ramadhin, Director

Infrastructure Planning & Development (IPD)

Toronto Shelter & Support Services (TSSS)

City of Toronto



City of Toronto Shelter System



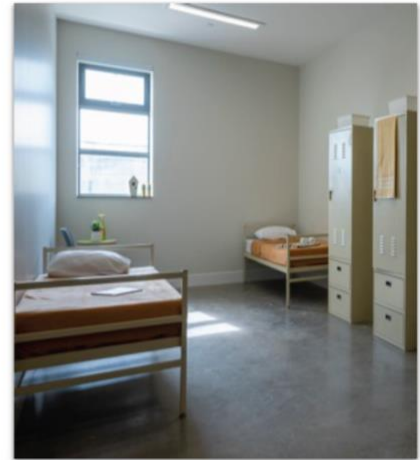
Currently the largest in Canada, providing shelter and support to about 12,000 people.

- Makes up over 50% of Ontario's shelter spaces
- In 2024, on average, about 200 callers to Central Intake were not matched to shelter each day.

Demand for shelter space has increased due to:

- Housing cost and insufficient affordable supply
- A volatile economy with high inflation
- Low wages and income supports
- Growing demand from refugee claimants

Demand is expected to continue to rise as it has in recent years.



4

4

Other City Services



- Daily outreach to those living outside, including in encampments
- Housing support through non-profit agencies, shelters and outreach staff
- Pet services, including food and emergency veterinary care
- Network of public washrooms, showers and drinking fountains
- Drop-ins services people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Crisis response to other vulnerable people



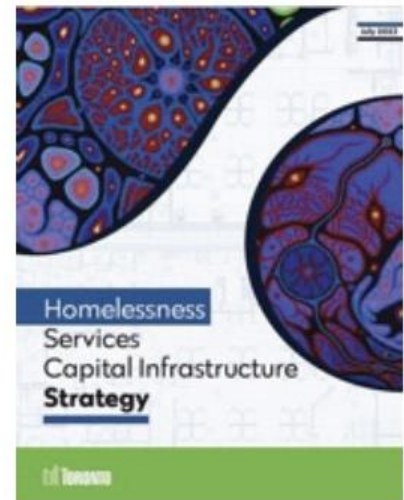
www.toronto.ca/homelesshelp



5

Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS)

- Toronto City Council approved a decade-long **Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS)**
- The HSCIS is focused on the recovery and stability of the shelter system
- Up to 20 new shelters by 2033, with approximately 1,600 spaces will be developed
- Purpose-built sites will improve client outcomes by being built to be more accessible, safer, and more responsive to the diverse needs of shelter clients



6

6

Shelter Location Siting

Alison Folosea, Director

Transaction Services

Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM)

City of Toronto



HSCIS – Real Estate Strategy



TSSS, CREM, and CreateTO are undertaking a real estate review to identify potential sites for new shelters

- The search covers both private sites for acquisition, and City-owned sites and lands
- Site search includes hundreds of sites across the city through listings, brokerages, and networks
 - Shelters must be located on properties zoned to allow for municipal shelter use
 - Sites cannot be located on lands zoned for Employment or Industrial use
- In December, the City announced **4 City-owned sites** and **2 privately-owned sites** to meet the City's 2024 objectives



Target opportunities include:

Vacant City-owned properties

Properties owned by other levels of government and public agencies

Privately-owned lands with buildings with strong potential for conversion



HSCIS – Site Identification

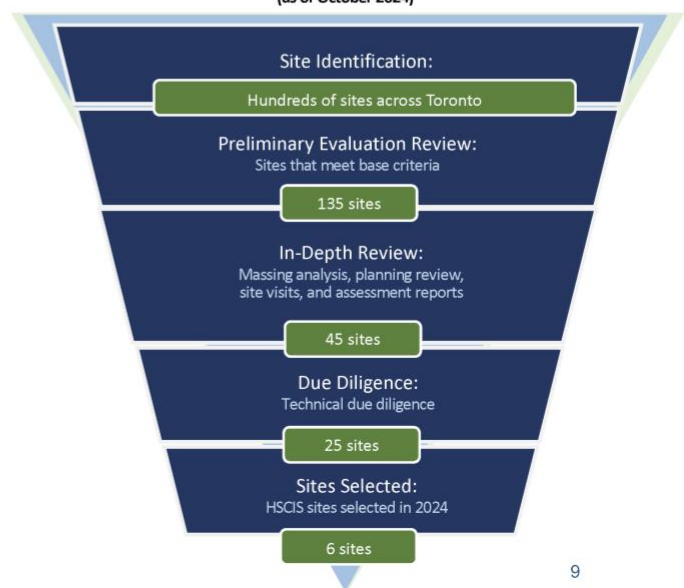
Sites Assessed

- 100 privately owned sites assessed
- 37 City-owned sites assessed

Key Site Criteria

1. Site availability
2. Permitted Use (compliance with zoning/planning policy)
3. Site Size (existing building size, vacant lot size)
4. Proximity from existing shelters
5. Proximity to amenities

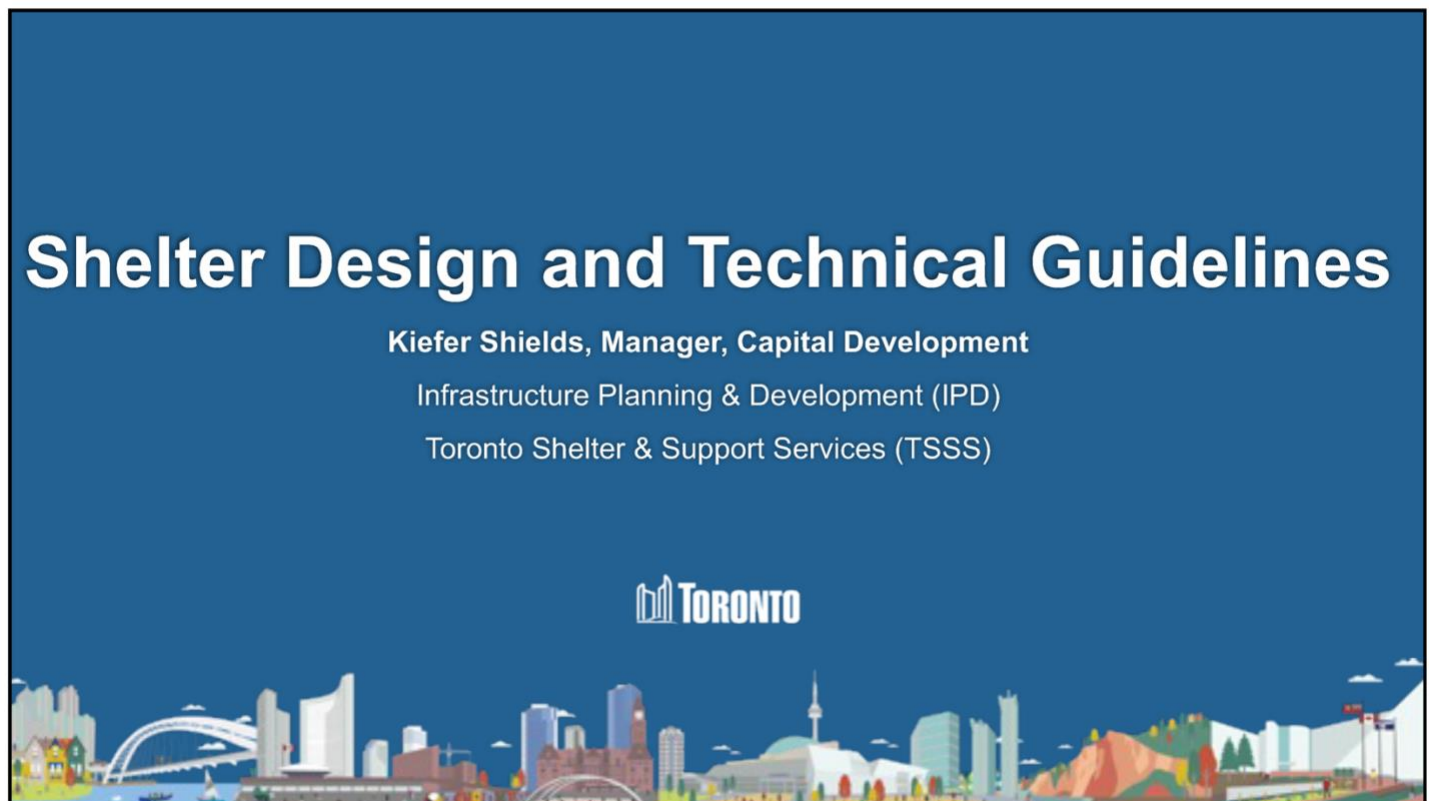
Site Search Summary (as of October 2024)



Due Diligence at 2535 Gerrard St. E.

Requirement	Functional Criteria	2535 Gerrard St. E.
Zoning & Planning Permissions	Not located within lands zoned for Employment or Industrial use. Meet zoning by- laws and Official Plan requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Zoned as Residential Multiple (RM) ✓ A municipal shelter is permitted use
Building Requirements	<p>Size Range: approximately 15,000 – 30,000 square feet for clients, supporting programming, and operating space & staff</p> <p>Height Limit: Up to 6 stories tall, with serviceable elevators for buildings >3 stories</p> <p>Property Availability: Vacant upon possession</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The building is ~15,598 Sq. ft., lot area: 36,503.28 ✓ Single-storey with existing 2-storey front structure ✓ Vacant upon possession
Location	Located in an accessible area with proximity to public transportation, with a preference for under-served areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ On the Gerrard St TTC bus line ✓ Close to Danforth GO, Main, and Victoria Park Subway Station
Accessibility	Accessible infrastructure to adhere to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) or ability to upgrade in the future	✓ The project design considers a single-storey, accessible building with barrier-free entrances and ramps where needed
Agreement Term	Availability for purchase	✓ Purchased by City of Toronto
Activation	Long-term site, available for use year-round	✓ The site is acquired by the City of Toronto, and will be operated year-around
Timing and Site Readiness	Demonstrate ability to convert to shelter use	✓ Blank slate for construction and fit-up

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The design team will use the **Design Principles** outlined in the **Shelter Design and Technical Guidelines Version 2 (SDG)** prepared by the City of Toronto to guide design decisions and ensure that the design meets the needs of shelter users, staff and operators as well as aligned with objectives of related City Divisions.



SITE LAYOUT & VISIBILITY

SDG Principle: Site and Building Design for Safety and Security

- Building footprint remains setback from residential uses
- Windows are strategically designed and located to avoid overlook onto residential uses
- Existing and proposed trees create a sense of privacy while allowing for natural surveillance



PRIVACY

SDG Principle: Building Orientation and Landscaping
SDG Principle: Noise Mitigation

- Privacy fence, existing and proposed trees/ vegetation limit views to and from neighbouring properties
- Resident outdoor amenity area is located away from neighbouring housing and buffered by trees to mitigate noise



SECURITY & ACCESS

SDG Principle: Access Control

- The site design prevents access from Coalport Drive to ensure there is no unauthorized entry or exits onto the street
- The front of the building accommodates visible entry for large emergency and servicing vehicles minimizing the impacts on the neighbouring sites



COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

SDG Principle: Integration with Communities

- The building design is residential in scale and, materials to match the fit and feel of the surrounding residential community
- The landscape design provides new green edges on the street and perimeter of the site to create a welcoming public face

Shelter Operations

Lorraine Clarke, Manager, Operations & Support Services

Homelessness Initiative Prevention Services

Toronto Shelter & Support Services (TSSS)

City of Toronto



2535 Gerrard St. E. Shelter Operations

Tentative Opening Date

- Q1 2027

Shelter Details

- Approximately **80 spaces** for a mixed adult population
- Shelter operator and programming to be determined

24/7 Staffing and Support

- All locations are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week



2535 Gerrard St. E. Shelter Operations

Key Questions We've Received	Shelter Service Model (2535 Gerrard)	Historical Shelters
Are clients required to leave every morning?	No, clients are not required to leave or "kicked out"	Previously, yes this did take place at select sites.
How long do clients typically stay?	Clients stay in a shelter approximately six months	At many sites, clients move from shelter to shelter very often
Are in-house services provided?	Yes, many services are provided in house (housing supports, on-site programming, health care, counselling)	Little or no supports were provided on-site
Is food provided at the shelter?	3 meals are provided daily	1 meal per day, or no meals provided

Collaborative Partnerships

- Partner agencies provide wrap-around supports including access to primary health care, and income support referrals

Specialized Training for Staff

- Harm reduction and overdose prevention (including naloxone use)
- Conflict resolution and crisis management
- Immediate response to non-police or non-EMS-related matters

2535 Gerrard St. E. Shelter Operations

Comprehensive wrap-around support includes:

- Day programs such as budgeting, housing workshops, and life skills training
- On-site community services, which may include:
 - Health-related services
 - Childcare
 - Education and skills training
 - Pet care support

Comprehensive Supports and Partnerships – On-Site Services

- Case management with personalized housing plans
- Health and mental health support
- Trauma-informed care and harm reduction interventions
- Recreational, social, employment, and academic programming



Shelter Operators Goals



Goal	Description
Provide a Safe and Stabilizing Environment	Offer a secure and supportive space for individuals currently living outdoors.
Facilitate Housing Transitions	Assist shelter guests in finding and sustaining permanent housing solutions.
Promote Life Skills and Wellness	Develop programs focused on enhancing life skills and supporting mental and physical well-being.
Foster Community Connections	Cultivate a strong sense of community both within the shelter and with the broader community.
Encourage Collaborative Engagement	Create opportunities for programming that brings together shelter residents and members of the surrounding community.
Advance Equity and Inclusion	Ensure all programs and services are accessible, inclusive, and equitable, addressing the diverse needs of all shelter users.



Community Engagement

Suhail Ahmed, Manager, Planning & Engagement

Infrastructure Planning & Development (IPD)

Toronto Shelter & Support Services (TSSS)

City of Toronto



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Community Engagement



- The City is committed to working with neighbours to support the success of new shelters
 - Share accurate information about the service
 - Foster meaningful communication, collaboration and partnership with local stakeholders
 - Ensure local concerns are heard and priorities are proactively addressed
 - Emphasis on the success of the homelessness service in the community, not the service location
- Community Engagement Facilitators (CEF) are hired to lead community engagement and have expertise in managing complex engagement projects.



Next Steps

- For program updates visit the 2535 Gerrard St. E. webpage: www.toronto.ca/2535Gerrard
- Learn more about shelter development: www.toronto.ca/newshelters
- To engage further, contact 3PP at: 2535Gerrard@Gmail.com
- For general questions about City services to support those experiencing homelessness please email Homeless.Support@toronto.ca

Engagement Team:



Attachment 3. Questions and Answers from the Zoom chat

There were about 150 people online participating in the meeting through the livestream. 32 participants asked questions and/or shared comments in the chat, including:

- 12 participants who shared concerns only;
- 3 who shared support for the shelter;
- 14 who asked neutral questions of clarification;
- 2 who asked neutral questions and shared concerns; and
- 1 who asked a neutral question and shared support for the shelter.

The 32 participants shared a total of 95 questions/comments. The average number of questions/comments per person was 3. The most questions/comments shared by one person was 12 and the fewest questions/comments shared by one person was one.

There were many questions and comments that focused on similar themes to those shared by people who participated in-person. Feedback has been grouped and synthesized by the Third Party Public facilitation team to remove repetition. Numbers on the headings are for ease of reference only.

Answers were provided by the City of Toronto Shelter and Support Services team following the meeting and are included immediately after each question in *italics*.

1. Shelter operations

- **How are shelter clients selected? What criteria are used?**

Clients go through the Central Intake process and must meet the demographic served at the shelter. Central Intake helps people experiencing homelessness find emergency shelter by assessing their needs and referring them to available spaces in shelters or respite sites across the city. More information can be found our webpage:

https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/homeless-help/central-intake/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

- **Are these individuals from the neighborhood (as implied by speakers representing faith-based organizations) or is the City bringing in individuals from other areas?**

All shelter residents will go through the Central Intake process. The City recognizes there is a high demand for shelter services in Scarborough.

- **What happens to the people once the shelter is full?**

If there are no suitable spaces, clients are encouraged to go through the Central Intake process.

- **Can the capacity be expanded during cold weather?**

This is not planned and warming centres are opened during the winter.

- **What's the average age of shelter clients?**

The demographic to be served in the shelter program is adults of all genders.

- **Are shower locations included in the shelter resource network?**

This shelter will have showers on site for shelter residents.

- **Will there be safe injection on site?**

No, this is not a safe injection site. Staff do not provide substances to anyone, nor do they administer or supervise the consumption of any substances. The shelter will not offer supervised consumption services.

2. Shelter staff

- **Can you advise the number of staff members that are proposed to be on site?**

Depending on the size of a shelter program, there can be up to 20 staff on site.

- **What is the ratio of staff per clients?**

It is dependent on the program but staff is always available to clients. For this program the ratio is expected to be 1:20 for case management.

- **Do staff sleep on site?**

Staff do not sleep on site but are on site 24/7. All staff who are on evening and overnight shifts perform night duties, similar to day staff.

3. Neighbourhood clean-up

- **Will the community have direct access to a clean-up crew or staff members when debris (including any sex and drug paraphernalia) from shelter residents is found in our backyards or on our property?**

The City will work closely with the operator to develop safety measures and good neighbour policies for this site. The operator will work closely with community stakeholders to discuss issues of community safety through regular Community Liaisons Committee meetings.

4. Location / siting process

- **Why are shelters not allowed in employment or industrial areas? Can you explain the reason?**

Employment and industrial areas are reserved for businesses and operations that need to be physically separated from specific uses, including shelters and residential uses. People experiencing homelessness access to the communities - placing shelters in these areas would isolate people, pushing them to the margins of society, away from the very resources that could help them rebuild their lives.

- **Will you outline the criteria used to select shelter sites and share how each and every identified site aligned or failed to align with those criteria? If not, why not?**

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.*
- *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.*

- **Can you tell us what the price of the 2535 Gerrard St E property was listed as and what did the City pay?**

The site was purchased for \$6.9 million.

- **If we are in an emergency state for homelessness, why are you waiting to create state of the art facilities? Emergencies call for creativity, such as using the city owned facility along Lakeshore where all the encampment residents have chosen to take up space. Why not develop small, tiny homes on property you already own?**

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. These sites better align to the Toronto Shelter Design Guidelines:

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/emergency-shelter-operators/new-shelter-design/>

- **Why did the residents not have any say in this matter? Our opinions were never heard or considered.**

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.

This Council decision has 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 engage with local communities on how to best support and integrate shelters into neighbourhoods, and not on the location for the new shelters.*

- **Can the size of the shelter be reduced here and spread out to other places? For example, could there be 20 people here? That way not all 80 shelter clients would be in one place.**

No, it cannot be reduced as there is a homelessness crisis. The target capacity is 50-80 clients.

5. Community safety

- **Will the City be conducting a study to assess negative community impact and comprehensively addressing these? On-site security doesn't seem sufficient for everyone involved.**

The City will proactively plan and monitor the safety required for this site. Wider community concerns will be addressed with relevant community partners as required.

- **How can you ensure safety in the neighbourhood that I grew up in and now am raising my family in?**

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.

- **My children are already harassed at the plaza by the handful of homeless there. How will children be protected when this number of homeless is tenfold? Will the City be responsible for their 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.

The SafeTO team is partnering with Toronto Shelter and Support Services in building the necessary relationships to address concerns. Our Division also works closely with Toronto Police Services with a dedicated Inspector from TPS that works with us to assess these situations and mobilizes internally to work with local Division and their Command. This is new with the SafeTO work I'm leading.

- **What staff members can we contact when there are violent and indecent acts being committed on my pay property in front of my infant?**

Shelter staff will be available for contact, however - individuals should contact the Toronto Police for violent or indecent acts. A Who to Call sheet will be distributed to the community prior to the shelter opening.

- **Will shelter operators patrol the neighbourhood to ensure their clients are not causing issues for neighbours? Will the local parks and schoolyards be patrolled each morning to pick up**

needles and debris the clients may leave?

Safety supports differ from shelter to shelter and vary based on the complexity and size of the shelter. For more complex sites, Toronto Shelter and Support Services has community safety teams who pick up needles, but that service isn't needed for many sites. Toronto Shelter and Support Services partners with SafeTO and police to ensure we are working with the community to achieve safety and wellbeing.

- **One of the City consultations was about getting an off-leash dog park. We are excited to get one across the street. But now we have to share with homeless people and their pets? How can they afford vet bills and dog obedience training etc. Now we are concerned our pets won't be safe.**

The City of Toronto has a pet policy to help manage pets at the shelter site.

- **Will increased police presence be granted to protect the neighbourhood?**
TSSS will be working closely with TPS to support the shelter, clients, and the neighborhood.
- **The Sanctuary near Yonge and Bloor also resulted in cases of bonfires and arson. It is a huge danger to the community especially the preschool next to the site.**
- **The City, along with municipal, provincial and federal social services are chronically underfunded, understaffed and overwhelmed. The City has consistently turned a blind eye in the past to shelter clients and supervised drug site users actively using and discarding on school, daycares and private properties. What is your plan to ensure the health and safety of the community? What has the City learned? What kind of responsibility and accountability are you prepared to take when things inevitably become overrun,**

overwhelmed, and understaffed? Who can we, as concerned community members with kids in daycare and school and families who want to enjoy our neighborhood, hold accountable as this development moves forward? Providing a space to air our concerns now is one thing, but I'd like to hear the plan for the follow through.

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.

- **Is the City bringing more police to deal with the issues that will come outside?**

TSSS will be working closely with TPS to support the shelter, clients, and the neighborhood.

- **If you are handing out drug kits for these people to do drugs, but not in house, how are you ensuring the safety of our community and young children?**

Staff do not provide substances to anyone, nor do they administer or supervise the consumption of any substances. All shelters must comply with Harm Reduction requirements as detailed in [Toronto Shelter Standards](#). All shelters work from a Harm reduction approach which is set of strategies designed to reduce substance-related harm without requiring abstinence. 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, which include referrals to appropriate programs and services in the community. The shelter will not offer supervised consumption services.

- **What example can the City provide that these new "best practices" do not lead to negative affects to the surrounding neighbourhood?**

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 centers, and health care services.

6. Working with and/or monitoring shelter clients

- **How will you monitor those who leave the premises?**

It is important to remember that shelter residents are equal citizens of the city and have the same rights, freedoms and responsibilities as other residents of the city. Like all residents, they are expected to conduct themselves within the rules/laws and bylaws in the community.

- **Can you guarantee there will be no drug use in the surrounding area?**

Safety supports differ from shelter to shelter and vary based on the complexity and size of the shelter. For more complex sites, Toronto Shelter and Support Services has community safety teams who pick up needles, but that service isn't needed for many sites.

- **Why will it take two years to house the folks who have apparently a pressing immediate need? We have lots of hotel space that could be used right now. Why are we not using that space?**

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.

- **If they have mental health issues, how do you help ensure our safety and security?**

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.

The City works to ensure appropriate supports are brought in – the number and type of supports is based on clientele, such as whether the clientele needs medical supports, for example. Three meals a day will be provided. While many people experiencing homelessness suffer from mental health and addiction, these aren't the only things that lead to homeless. Some shelter residents are low income, some have been evicted from their homes, and some are refugees.

Toronto Shelter and Support Services brings services into shelters, as needed, including medical supports. has a partnership with Inner-City Health Associates (ICHA) who are present at shelter sites to provide clients with primary health care as well as make referrals to specialists for things like mental health and addictions treatment. The shelter will bring services for the clients to the community to ensure they are supported including things like case management counsellors.

7. General support for the shelter

- **The City needs this shelter. City staff have done appropriate analysis. The proposal includes supports that we can reasonably anticipate will be needed by**

the users of the shelter. I don't see any compelling reason why the proposed shelter should not be located at 2535 Gerrard St. E.

- **Both my parents live near the proposed shelter. I grew up in the area and frequent the area for work. We are very proud to be in the community. We think the shelter is in the perfect spot. The community needs it. My parents interact with street involved people in the area often and would like to see more services provided particularly for people who need a place to sleep and to access services that are much needed. Residents want to see people not on the street but then are against a permanent location where people can be off the street. It's contradictory. We three support this shelter. It will address many of the issues in the neighbourhood.**
- **Our only concern is the stigma that comes with opening a shelter and the NIMBYism that will follow. There are a lot of misconceptions and those need to be addressed. I am very happy that it was done without too much public consultation because I would trust the professionals to know where to place something that is much needed. Being close to a daycare and businesses are not valid reasons for pushback. One of the most important messages to residents is the amount of shelter staff, the breadth of the services, and the number of residents.**

8. City responses to community questions

- **What personal assurances can you provide ensuring that all the information provided is accurate and fully transparent?**

The City has hired Third Party Public who serve as a third party facilitator to ensure two way communications. The City works with their partners to ensure clear and

accurate communication. **Who can I discuss my questions with directly?**

Please send your questions to the dedicated email address for this site at 2535Gerrard@gmail.com

9. Council and staff mandates

- **I don't remember voting on this Council mandate. Were residents of Toronto even aware of this initiative? A 10-year program to create 20 homeless shelters should have been discussed with Toronto residents.**

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.

This council decision has 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.*

10. Questions about the building

- **Please specify what "residential in size" means. How many square feet and how many storeys?**

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

11. Engagement process

- **Will there be any community engagement with respect to the selection of the shelter support service provider prior to the decision being made? What are the selection criteria? (e.g., hopefully not just the lowest bid). In an effort to**

provide more transparency, will the City keep the community informed throughout the selection process? When do you expect the decision re: the service provider to be made?

There will not be any community engagement with respect to the selection of the shelter support service provider prior to the decision being made. More information on the selection criteria can be found on the City's webpage:

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/emergency-shelter-operators/homelessness-shelter-operator-expression-of-interest/>. The City is committed to keeping the community informed about the results of the selection process and expects to be providing an update on this soon.

- **How long have you been working on this proposal and how many hours of personnel input have been accumulated in preparing this proposal?**
The City has been working on identifying new shelter locations for several years, with the most recent work happening over the last several months, since the most recent direction from Toronto City Council to accelerate the construction of new, purpose-built, City shelters.
- **How can a limited 5-minute statement in any way constitute a valid community consultation, especially in view of the extensive criteria established by the Supreme Court of Canada for community consultations?**

The City does not consult on site selection but the integration into the community. The Community Meeting on January 21st was only one of many ways the City of Toronto is engaging with the community.

- **If this is meant to be respectful, why was one questioner allowed to use the term "not in my neighborhood?" Moderation needs to be more effective.**
There are people who do not want the shelter in their neighbourhood. The City

does not consider this feedback to be disrespectful.

- I'm wondering if the misinformation in some comments/questions will be taken out of a report at all? Some of these anecdotes are very inaccurate and/or unfair to the people who would use the shelter services anyways. This is... quite literally... the community involvement & production of a "social contract," from my standpoint.

The meeting summary is intended to reflect feedback shared during the meeting. Where there is significant misinformation, the City has added text under the heading of "Note added by City of Toronto staff after the meeting."

- Thank you to the City Staff for your very clear and concise presentations. Would it be possible for you to share the deck that kicked off the meeting tonight with me so that I may be able to share it with other interested parties in the area?

The slide deck will be available on the site's webpage at www.toronto.ca/2535gerrard.

- Thank you too for a very well-run meeting, covering a difficult issue.

12. Funding

- Would the team please take a moment to help us understand where the shelter funding process is with the Federal Government?

The City is requesting funding of \$674.5 million over 10 years from the federal government to support the capital funding needs of Toronto's Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy.

For more details please see

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-246468.pdf>

The federal government was requested to provide financial support to help fund the

HSCIS. The City is in active negotiations with the federal government to secure the full capital cost of the HSCIS. Collaboration with and financial support from other levels of government is critical to establish sustainable and collaborative solutions for those requiring access to shelter spaces in the city.

13. Property values

- If I can't sell my house because buyers don't want to buy near the shelter, can I sue the City for losses?

The City is not aware of any evidence that property values have been affected in communities where shelters have been located. Property values in Toronto are driven by much larger factors such as market demand, housing supply, interest rates, and neighborhood amenities.

14. Other

- Has anyone on your staff lived directly beside or nearby a homeless shelter run by the city? What was their experience, if so?

City staff live across many different areas of the city and have their own unique experiences.

15. Online process

- Will you ensure that all questions asked will be fully answered and discussed?
- Will you share all questions to everyone in attendance and the City responses and will you provide an opportunity to further discuss that information as required to fulfill the statutory requirement of a community consultation?

The City will answer questions and continue to be available for further discussion and engage the community.