



Summary of the Virtual Information Session:

The City of Toronto held a virtual information session on April 15, 2025 from 7-8:30 pm to discuss plans to open a shelter at 66 Third Street. At the meeting, the City announced that it is moving forward with an approximately 50-bed shelter at 66 Third Street designed to accommodate the needs of unhoused seniors, aged 55+. The City also announced that the facility would be operated by [Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre](#).

Approximately 250 members of the public attended the session. The session was facilitated by Joe Mihevc, Principal, Mihevc Consulting and Mediation, with technical support by Bri Gardner-Ford and Yasmin Yusuf of Public Progress, with remarks by Deputy Mayor Amber Morley and presentations by City of Toronto staff:

- Gord Tanner, General Manager, Toronto Shelter & Support Services Division;
- Loretta Ramadhin, Director, Infrastructure Planning and Development, Toronto Shelter & Support Services Division;
- Suhal Ahmed, Manager, Planning and Engagement, Infrastructure Planning and Development, Toronto Shelter & Support Services Division;
- Scott McKean, Associate Director, Violence Prevention and SafeTO, Social Development, Finance & Administration Division;
- Simon McKenzie, Manager, Development, CreateTO;
- John Duncan, Senior Planner, Zoning, City Planning Division;
- Lynn Daly, Executive Director, Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre;
- Sergeant Nikolaos Maicantis, Neighbourhood Community Officer Team #1 Supervisor; 22 Division

A copy of the slide presentation for the session can be found at this link:

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/8dfd-66-Third-St-Virtual-Townhall-April-2025.pdf>

A video recording of the session can be found at this link:

<https://youtu.be/C9x9-8QSE6U>

Presentations:

Amber Morley welcomed participants to the session, acknowledging that both support and concerns have been heard from the community and emphasizing her commitment to addressing those concerns.

Loretta Ramadhin gave a background on the [Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy](#), noting that Toronto's shelter system is at capacity and that there is an urgent need for action on homelessness in the City of Toronto, leading to Toronto City Council approving the Strategy. While housing is the ultimate solution to homelessness, shelters are necessary to fill gaps in critical services. Homelessness has many causes, including a lack of affordable housing, inflation, and income supports which do not meet the cost of living. In addition, many individuals in Toronto experience "hidden homelessness," in which they may not be visibly homeless but live in precarious or unsafe situations, including couch-surfing or living in cars.

Loretta also provided an update that the City of Toronto has been working closely with Councillor Morley's office to collect, review, and consider feedback on the shelter at 66 Third Street. Toronto Shelter Support Services committed to incorporating community feedback into the shelter's design and operations, and that feedback incorporated into the shelter project would align with the needs of those experiencing homelessness.

Loretta also shared an update on the community engagement activities that have taken place since the shelter's announcement in December 2024, including door-to-door canvassing of over 1,500 residences in the immediate residential area as well as local businesses, two coffee and conversation events at Woods Manor, three parent focused groups, a parent information night, and two faith leader focus groups. Meetings have also been held with the New Toronto Lakeshore Village Residents Association and the Lakeshore Village BIA and responses have been gathered to over 350 emails and calls. The City additionally hosted an in-person drop-in session on February 10, 2025 attended by over 300 residents and a virtual town hall with more than 250 attendees. Key themes that have been heard throughout this process have related to concern about New Toronto and Third Street, a need for transparent updates and opportunities for inputs, concerns about increased risks, clarity on size, outdoor space, and crime prevention, concern about the need for shelters to serve the community, and a need for clarity on shelter operations.

Loretta announced that 66 Third Street will serve seniors aged 55+ experiencing homelessness. As of April 2, 2025, there were 1498 seniors (55+) in the shelter system, which is 15.6% of all clients. There are currently two shelters dedicated to seniors with a mixed adult program in Toronto: Islington Seniors Shelter, with a total occupancy of 83, and Scarborough Village Residence with a total occupancy of 93. Seniors may find themselves homeless for a variety of reasons, including declining health or job loss, with lengthy wait lists for seniors' residences and long-term care homes. Due to an increased need for accessibility, elevating devices, and medical spaces, the capacity for the site will be approximately fifty spaces. Loretta also announced that [Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre](#) was selected as the operator, following a competitive [Expression of Interest](#) process.

Finally, Loretta shared a draft rendering of the shelter design for 66 Third Street, noting that, while there have been concerns about the size of the lot in comparison to other shelter sites in Toronto, the small lot size is expected to be offset by having multiple stories. The shelter will be designed so that the rooftop does not overlook residential areas, and the front entrance may be moved to the side of the building to prevent congregation of clients on Third Street. The shelter will be designed and built with a thoughtfully designed exterior, onsite meal preparation, a multi-bed occupancy sleeping area, an outdoor client area, onsite enhanced health care, and communal program and dining rooms. The tentative timeline for the opening of the shelter is between 2028 and 2030.

Simon McKenzie shared that TSSS, CreateTO, and the City's Corporate Real Estate Management division reviewed over 200 sites across the City, including approximately 15 in Ward 3, for appropriateness as a municipal shelter. Of these 200 sites, six were identified

citywide for the first phase of the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy, including 66 Third Street. Sites were selected based on availability, zoning permissions, site size, proximity to existing shelters, access to amenities and proximity to public transit. 66 Third Street was chosen for shelter use by City staff based on meeting the key shelter site criteria: the site had been deemed surplus by Toronto Parking Authority and immediately available; the existing zoning of the site permits municipal shelters; early due diligence showed that a shelter would be able to comfortably fit and conform to shelter design guidelines on the lot; the site has access to many amenities and is immediately adjacent to Lake Shore Boulevard West, a major arterial with public transit.

Gord Tanner spoke on the increasing homelessness in Etobicoke, a lack of capacity in the shelter system, and the challenges in establishing new shelters, including a lack of understanding and stigma around homelessness. Gord also gave an overview of shelter operations: all TSSS shelters have staff onsite 24/7 who are trained in de-escalation, conflict resolution, crisis prevention, intervention, and management and who can immediately respond to non-police- and non-EMS-related matters. Shelter programming at 66 Third Street will be tailored to the needs of senior clientele, with comprehensive support including access to primary health care and mental health care, referrals to employment and financial support, and case management through a Housing First lens. Three nourishing meals will be provided daily, and clients will not be required to leave the shelter each morning. On average, TSSS clients stay in the shelter system for approximately six months.

Lynn Daly spoke to introduce the Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre (CONC) and their approach to community services. CONC was founded in 1993 to provide essential services for vulnerable community members, and believes in working in collaboration with residents, community institutions, agencies, local businesses and stakeholders to create a safe and healthy community.

Following formal presentations by City staff, two community groups were invited to deliver remarks.

David Margulies presented on behalf of the New Toronto Initiative, expressing that, while shelter is a basic human need and helping vulnerable people is a moral imperative, they have concerns about the proposed shelter, including proximity to a seniors residence; proximity to local schools; potential for increased violence; inadequate space for emergency vehicles; fear of drug use in the nearby alley and parks due to harm reduction services offered at the site; an increased crime rate in New Toronto as a result of the shelter; a lack of transit in the area; a belief that the site did not meet Toronto Shelter Standards, and a perceived disproportionate amount of supportive housing in New Toronto relative to other neighbourhoods in the city.

Erin Panjer presented on behalf of the Etobicoke Lakeshore Shelter Support Coalition, speaking about the urgency of addressing the housing crisis and the City's need to proceed with shelters; the importance of educating and mobilizing residents on homelessness and housing issues; the significant number of unhoused people in Toronto, including a substantial population in Etobicoke and among seniors; and successful models like Finland, where community collaboration led to a significant reduction in long-term homelessness. She called for community members to collaborate with the shelter provider to address concerns and create a successful model for future shelters.

Q&A

The Q&A session allowed community members to raise their concerns and questions directly to city officials and representatives. Key topics and exchanges included:

Community Engagement Models

- *Question:* A participant inquired about the most effective models for community involvement to ensure their concerns were addressed.
- *Answer:* Loretta Ramadhin and Deputy Mayor Morley emphasized their commitment to ongoing dialogue, including discussions on shelter operations, design, and pre-opening program modeling. They said there would be an opportunity for establishment of working groups on specific issues including safety, and that a community liaison committee would be struck before the shelter's opening.

Site Justification and Due Diligence

- *Questions:*
 - A participant questioned the site selection, arguing it didn't meet minimum requirements for land size, setbacks, or transit access, and raised concerns about costs.
 - A participant asked if the City could claim due diligence given revisions to the shelter's demographic and size five months after its announcement.
 - A participant asked how concerns were being addressed and how the shelter aligned with revitalization goals, including related to the Lake Shore Boulevard West Avenue Study.
- *Answers:*
 - Gord Tanner cited cost savings generated by moving away from the hotel room shelter system and the long-term value of city-owned assets. 66 Third Street is expected to operate at about half the cost of current hotel based shelter programs.
 - Simon McKenzie stated that CreateTO's analysis confirmed the site could comfortably accommodate a shelter conforming to design guidelines, and that this analysis has been confirmed by architects.
 - Loretta Ramadhin reiterated that seniors are a subset of the mixed adult population and that the specialization of the demographic is not indicative of a broad shift in the City's approach or plans.
 - Deputy Mayor Morley explained that work on the shelter project predated the Lake Shore Boulevard West Avenue Study and that development of a shelter does not contradict the ultimate goals of this study, as it is aligned with broader community revitalization efforts.

Rationale for the Shelter

- *Question:* A participant expressed a perception that the City had lost the trust of the community, who felt discriminated against. The participant expressed a perception that sufficient community consultation had not occurred and that the online townhall format was insufficient as unanswered questions in the Q&A box were not openly visible to all participants.
- *Answers:*
 - Gord Tanner expressed sympathy for the feelings of distrust stemming from the community, indicating that they perhaps resulted from the inability of staff to conduct broader community consultation prior to selecting sites, but noted that this process was decided by City Council in 2017. He also emphasized South Etobicoke's suitability for a shelter program, as it is not currently well served by TSSS. He also committed to a focus on gaining trust in the community by listening, meeting, and committing to make the shelter successful for those it will serve and those in the neighbourhood.
 - Loretta Ramadhin mentioned the importance of deeper community conversations now that the operator has been selected and the shelter clientele specified. She also noted that a document will be produced following the meeting with questions and comments from the chat with further answers provided.

Homelessness Statistics

- *Question:* A participant inquired about the metrics used in 2024 to count encampments in Etobicoke-Lakeshore.
- *Answer:* Gord Tanner shared that the City employs a full-time outreach team in Etobicoke to connect with people that are living outdoors and/or on the street, which is how they gathered data on the number of encampments resolved in 2024. He assured the meeting that there was a significant need in the neighbourhood that the City was trying to address.

Harm Reduction

- *Question:* A participant sought clarification on the definition of harm reduction and associated supplies.
- *Answer:* Gord Tanner explained harm reduction as a public health intervention aimed at better health outcomes for people who use substances. He indicated that a range of things may fall under the banner of harm reduction, but that ultimately it is an approach to working with people that is non-judgmental and centers on meeting the person where they are at, focusing on how to provide them support. He noted that all of the City's shelters provide safer use supplies including condoms, clean needles, and clean pipes. These items are also available at community health centres, hospitals and pharmacies.

Community Safety and Support

- *Questions:* Concerns were raised about community safety. Some participants asked how the community could get involved and support the shelter, and a participant emphasized the need to support the seniors who will be using the shelter.
- *Answers:* Staff Sergeant Macantis and Scott McKean addressed community safety, highlighting the importance of the work inside the shelters and community collaboration, thinking holistically about the community and utilizing existing resources to support community safety. Loretta Ramadhin noted that there would be volunteer and donation opportunities once the shelter is operational, as well as opportunities for engaging with the City and the shelter operator prior to the site becoming operational, including through a community liaison committee.

Shelter Operations and Resident Demographics

- *Question:* A participant asked about staff-to-resident ratios and the definition of "senior".
- *Answer:* Gord Tanner clarified that there would be more staff during the day for case management and wraparound support, including case management counsellors, frontline shelter staff, and supervisors, in addition to other professionals onsite to deliver health services or recreation supports. TSSS defines seniors as 55 and older as those experiencing homelessness often experience accelerated aging due to factors they face while unhoused.

Integration with Nearby Services

- *Question:* A participant inquired about potential integration with the nearby Woods Manor Seniors Residence.
- *Answer:* Gord Tanner indicated that he thought there could be a lot of synergy between the two programs and indicated that this is where the operator, Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre is a community expert and collaborator.

Interim Support Measures

- *Question:* A participant asked about interim support plans for those who are facing housing and food insecurity issues in the community, indicating that three years is a long time to wait for the shelter to be up and running.
- *Answer:* Gord Tanner stated that the City is focused on supporting as many people as possible and suggested calling 311 so the City could dispatch street outreach teams, or calling central intake to access beds in the shelter system. He noted the reality that over 100 people each day in the City are looking for a shelter space which they cannot be matched to, indicating the need to continue working on affordable housing and shelter projects as quickly as possible.

Next Steps

- Questions submitted that were not addressed during the meeting will be answered and posted on www.toronto.ca/66Third. The 66 Third Street webpage will include updated timelines, key milestones, and information about other community meetings as it becomes available.
- Deputy Mayor Morley's office is interested in forming working groups to address issues discussed during the meeting. There will be opportunities for community input on the design and programming of the shelter later in the year, and there is a possibility of organizing a community walk in advance of the shelter opening focused on crime prevention through environmental design.
- TSSS officials emphasized the importance of ongoing conversations and community engagement throughout the shelter development process.