



City of Toronto

MEET THE OPERATOR EVENT SUMMARY New Shelter at 2535 GERRARD STREET EAST

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Birchmount Park Collegiate Institute, 3663 Danforth Avenue

Drop-In from 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Overview of the event

On Wednesday, October 29, 2025, over 30 people participated in the Meet the Operator Event hosted by the City of Toronto for the new shelter at 2535 Gerrard Street East. The event was organized in collaboration with the operator, Warden Woods, with support from Councillor Kandavel and his team, who also attended.

Invitations were sent by email to more than 500 people who have expressed interest in receiving updates about the new shelter. City of Toronto staff from Toronto Shelter & Support Services and Corporate Security attended, together with staff from Warden Woods Community Centre (the future shelter operator), representatives from Toronto Police Services, and Third Party Public, the independent facilitation team retained by the City to support the community engagement process.

The purpose of the drop-in event was to give community members an opportunity to meet the team from Warden Woods Community Centre and participate in open conversations about various aspects of the shelter project. Community members were invited to share feedback and engage with staff across different stations focusing on Engagement, Shelter Construction, Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) Policy, Shelter Operations, and Community & Shelter Safety. Warden Woods Community Centre staff also set-up and staffed a kids' activity area.

This report was written by Third Party Public. It is not intended to be a verbatim transcript but is a high-level summary of what participants said they are interested in during the event. The City of Toronto will post this summary and continue to provide updates on the shelter construction and timelines to the website at www.Toronto.ca/2535gerrard

What participants said they were interested in

Throughout the event, Community residents engaged in ongoing dialogue with staff across a range of interconnected topics. These conversations reflected both curiosity and concern about how the future shelter would operate, how residents will be supported, and how the shelter will fit into the broader neighbourhood. The themes below summarize the main areas of interest expressed during these discussions.

Community Safety

Residents shared concerns about potential safety impacts in the surrounding area, including worries about fights or encampments near the shelter. Some participants expressed interest in whether a dedicated Neighbourhood Response Team (formerly referred to as Community Safety Teams) would be established, how it would function, who would operate it, the area it would cover, and its hours of operation. Others discussed the value of having a clear “Who to Call sheet” resource with City and community contacts to support neighbourhood responsiveness once the shelter opens.

Supporting the Shelter and Residents

A number of attendees expressed support for the shelter and an interest in contributing to its success. Community members spoke with Warden Woods staff about opportunities to get involved, including volunteering, organizing donations, or offering other forms of support for shelter residents.

Shelter Design and Operations

Participants sought clarity on the City’s ongoing role in operations once the shelter opens and Warden Woods takes over. They shared their interest in understanding what oversight the City will maintain over the long term. Residents also discussed elements of the site design, including fence height and privacy for adjacent properties, placement of lighting and cameras, potential noise impacts, and how these will be managed. There were also conversations about shelter operating hours and whether the site would operate 24/7, including how resident movement in and out of the shelter would work.

Shelter Residents

Some participants were interested in understanding the intake process and how residents come to be referred to the shelter. Conversations included questions about the background and profile of future residents, as well as what checks or processes are in place to support appropriate placement. Concerns were raised by some about the potential presence of individuals with histories of criminal activity, substance use, or other risks, and what this might mean for the neighbourhood. Participants also expressed interest in the supports that will be available to shelter residents, including income supports, employment programs, pathways to housing (including potential connections to future developments such as Victoria Park Station), and recreation or community-based programs.

Community Liaison Committee

Participants discussed the upcoming Community Liaison Committee, including when it will begin, how members will be selected, and how different community perspectives will be represented with the shared goal of a successful shelter.

Process Updates & Next Steps

Residents expressed interest in receiving regular updates about construction timelines and the anticipated opening date for the shelter. There was also conversation about a future meeting involving Councillor Kandavel, TSSS staff, and Toronto Police Service to support continued collaboration and information sharing