



1635 Dundas Street

October 3, 2023

Homelessness in Durham Region



In 2023, 331 individuals are experiencing homelessness, compared to 134 in 2017.



More people are experiencing homelessness across Durham Region.

67%

A significant increase in people experiencing unsheltered homelessness over the past year.

Low-Income

Durham Region has an estimated 45,800 residents (6.6%) living with low income, defined as \$26,570 after tax for an individual and \$53,1403 for a family of four.

Social Assistance

As of January 2023, the number of Ontario Works (OW) recipients in Durham was 12,835. The number of Ontario Disability Support Programs (ODSP) recipients was 19,952.



Since 2018, the current combined maximum amount for basic needs and shelter for a single OW recipient is **\$733/month**.

Average rent in Durham Region for a one-bedroom apartment: **\$1731/month**.

Two-bedroom apartment: **\$2123/month**.

People experiencing homelessness have varied, complex needs and require multifaceted supports including mental and physical health, food security, newcomer supports, child care, employment, social supports etc.



In 2021, 54% of people experiencing homelessness in Durham had high acuity or high needs. This increased to 64% in 2022.

The Role of the Region of Durham

- The Region of Durham is legislated by the province as a Service System Manager for Housing and Homelessness and designated by the federal government as the Community Entity.
- The Region is responsible for:
 - Housing system planning
 - Program management
 - Funding that meets all housing needs of Durham residents
 - Oversight of the homelessness support system

Regional Council Direction

“In the immediate short term, the facility will be used to provide low-barrier shelter services to approximately 45 individuals while the community consultation and engagement process is underway. Initial remediation activities including, deep cleaning and disinfection, painting, floor repairs, and the installation of fencing and security measures are anticipated. Processes will also be implemented to support this use, including procedures to address inquiries and concerns from the community.”

“Once a longer-term vision for the facility is established through the engagement and consultation work, a comprehensive renovation/retrofit plan will be developed and included in future capital budget requests.”

- Report COW-31 available on durham.ca

1635 Dundas Solution

- The purpose of the shelter is to reduce the number of people needing support in Durham Region through an intensive, housing-focused response that values housing as a solution to homelessness.
- 1635 Dundas will provide 45 shelter beds to help meet the community's urgent need ahead of the winter.
- The site is on a major transit line and costs significantly less than the cost of building new facility.
- The site will remain open during the day, allowing people to stay inside and work toward their goals, instead of having to go outside.
- Wrap-around services on-site daily to meet individual support needs.

“We don’t get to approve who buys the house across the street from us, and we don’t get to choose our neighbours” Barbara Hall, Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)

- Planning does not include decisions about types of people
- Until 1950s, deed could restrict sale based on race or religion
- Today, planning must be practiced “in a manner that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms” (Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement)
- “The device of zoning by reference to the relationship of occupants rather than the use of the building is one which is ultra vires of the municipality” (Supreme Court of Canada)

Ontario Human Rights Code & Housing

- The Code prohibits discrimination in housing
 - race, religion, sexual orientation, family status, disability or receipt of public assistance
- Constitutional - primacy over provincial / municipal powers
- Councillors bound by the Code and can be found in violation

“Opposition to housing projects based on stereotypes or prejudice towards the people who will live in them can be a violation of people’s rights to be free from discrimination in housing – which means it can be against the law.”

Ontario Human Rights Commission

Service System Manager: Homelessness

- A core business function of the Social Services Department is to plan and establish shelter to meet homelessness demand. Current homeless profile:
 - Individuals living in public spaces, ravines, tents and couch surfing
 - People living in their cars, including seniors and families with children
 - Chronically homeless (more than 6 months)
- Durham's shelter system has been at capacity for over a year.
- People living without shelter are vulnerable and lack opportunity to meet daily living needs. The longer someone lives without shelter it becomes more challenging to move out of the homelessness system.

Immediate and Long-term Housing

1635 Dundas St will address both immediate homelessness needs and create long-term housing solutions for residents.

- Short term:
 - 45-bed emergency shelter for those who choose to access the shelter.
 - Low-barrier access means those with health, medical and mental health needs will not be turned away.
 - Support staff on-site.
- Long term:
 - Potential for transitional housing and/or supportive housing.
 - By Name list data and housing needs.
 - Informed by community feedback. Contribute through the Your Durham page: yourdurham.ca/helpaddresshomelessness.

1635 Dundas Shelter Operations

- Oversight will be provided by the Social Services Department and operations of the shelter will be a partnership with a qualified community partner.
- Operations must meet shelter standards and adopt best practices.
 - Allows space for people to sleep and meet daily living needs.
 - Provisions of safety and security.
 - Intake procedures for all individuals and service assessments completed to prioritize support needs.
- Wrap-around support services on-site.
 - A term that means meeting people's individual needs through accessible, on-site services and help mitigate further crisis.
 - Wrap around services include; health services, addictions counselling, mental health support, financial services, and employment/life skills programming.
- Weapons, violence or abuse of any kind are not permitted in the shelter.

Provisions of Safety and Security

- Safety is a priority for both the community and those accessing the shelter.
- 10-foot privacy fence surrounding the property and lighting will be installed.
- Cameras will be installed and security guards on-site 24/7.
- Support staff on-site daily.
- One entrance will be used to access the shelter.
- For any criminal behaviour DRPS will be called using established protocols.

Dundas Liaison Committee

- Representation by Regional staff, community members, local business, service providers and people with lived experience.
- Call out for members: closed September 27
- Terms of Reference will be established.
- Purpose:
 - To share information, communicate neighbourhood concerns, and support mitigation strategies to promote the successful integration of this project and its residents within the broader Whitby community.
 - Seek out solutions for building strong positive community relations.
 - Establish communications protocols between the community, the Region and service provider.

August – December 2023 Actions:

- Installation of site safety measures.
 - Doors for entrance and egress, set up of the site, security systems, cameras
 - Fire safety plans and fire systems
- Renovations to address immediate needs including external site work and internal retrofits to flooring, walls and lighting.
- Fencing: Land surveying is completed, and installation will be complete before move-in.
- Expression of Interest for a community partner: October 2023
- Establish Dundas Liaison Committee: October 2023
- Target program start: November-December 2023