

What We've Heard So Far

Emergency and Transitional Housing
14452 Yonge Street, Town of Aurora

Summary of Community Comments

Last updated: February 2024

The *What We've Heard So Far* summary captures community feedback raised during meetings and discussions surrounding the proposed emergency and transitional housing at 14452 Yonge Street in the Town of Aurora. This document has been updated to incorporate feedback received at the Community Open House on Monday, January 29, 2024, and Community Open House Pre- and Exit Survey.

Answers to frequently asked questions from the community related to these comments and concerns are available in the [Community Questions](#) summary.

Planning for the proposed emergency and transitional housing development is ongoing. As plans evolve, information and details may change. York Region will share updated information online at york.ca/14452Yonge

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

York Region is facing a housing affordability crisis and, unfortunately, homelessness is a reality for many members of our community. Emergency and transitional housing play a key role in keeping people safe by providing accommodation for individuals experiencing homelessness as they search for permanent housing in the community. [York Region's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan](#) outlines actions that the Region is taking to address housing affordability and prevent homelessness.

York Region is proposing new emergency and transitional housing at 14452 Yonge Street in the Town of Aurora. The site is located centrally in York Region and is on Yonge Street – a main transit corridor – that provides access to potential places of employment and other important services. This location will provide space for more inclusive, diverse and flexible supports for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

In 2023, 57% of people who accessed emergency housing in York Region accessed it for the first time. Of the 218 people who stayed at Porter Place in 2023, 77% accessed emergency housing at Porter Place only once. According to the 2021 York Region Point-in-Time Count, the top contributing factor to homelessness was low income paired with a lack of affordable housing options.

The proposed development is in the planning application review process with the Town of Aurora. The [Town of Aurora Official Plan](#) encourages a broad range of housing and the proposed development meets the Town's policies pertaining to the location of special needs housing, communal housing and community facilities.

YORK REGION

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This summary reports on community consultation between 2021 and 2024. Public engagement meetings were held with community members, business owners and service providers about the proposed housing. Throughout the consultation process, three themes were heard:

1. Need for ongoing communication from the Region
2. Concerns regarding ensuring community safety
3. Planning for strong, caring and safe communities

The following engagement and outreach activities were completed:

- May 4, 2021 – [Town of Aurora General Committee Meeting presentation](#)
- June 24, 2021 – [Public Information Centre #1](#) (community partners and service providers, 35 attendees on Zoom, 158 YouTube views)
- November 10, 2021 – Initial mail-out (330+ addresses)
- November 22, 2021 – Consultation with York Regional Police
- November 29, 2021 – Neighbourhood door-to-door outreach
- December 2, 2021 – [Public Information Centre #2](#) (21 attendees on Zoom, 141 YouTube views)
- February 17, 2022 – Community Liaison Committee Meeting #1
- March 15, 2022 – Mail-out (970+ addresses)
- March 21, 2022 – [Public Information Centre #3](#) (43 attendees on Zoom, 143 YouTube views)
- May 11, 2022 – Community Liaison Committee Meeting #2
- December 14, 2022 – Community Liaison Committee Meeting #3
- December 21, 2022 – Year in Review Newsletter sent to e-newsletter subscribers (open rate of 78%) and hand-delivered to 20 addresses
- January 16, 2023 – Town of Aurora Public Planning Meeting mail-out (150+ addresses and hand-delivered to 20+ addresses)
- January 24, 2023 – [Town of Aurora Public Planning Meeting presentation](#)
- August 9, 2023 – Released a What We've Heard summary and updated Frequently Asked Questions on york.ca/14452Yonge
- October 11, 2023 – Community Liaison Committee Meeting #4
- January 10, 2024 – Community Open House Pre-Survey launched (116 responses received)
- January 17, 2024 – Community letters hand-delivered to neighbours (2,500+ addresses)
- January 18, 2024 – Community Liaison Committee Meeting #5
- January 19, 2024 – Postcards mailed to neighbours (8,500+ addresses)
- January 19, 2024 – Community Open House Newsletter sent to e-newsletter subscribers (open rate of 70%)
- January 29, 2024 – York Region Community Open House (150+ attendees, 131 YouTube views of the online presentation)
- January 29, 2024 – Community Open House Exit Survey launched (74 responses received)
- February 1, 2024 – Thank You Newsletter sent to e-newsletter subscribers (open rate of 72%)

York Region is committed to keeping community members informed and engaged throughout all phases of the project. Thank you to all who have inquired or provided input on this project to date. This report will be updated to reflect ongoing community consultation.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

A wide range of feedback has been shared on the proposed emergency and transitional housing at 14452 Yonge Street. The Region has heard from people who are in favour of the development and from those who have concerns about the development. This summary reflects key points from meetings and discussions and is not intended to be a transcript.

Community Need

There is an overwhelming recognition from the community of the need to provide housing and a range of supports for people experiencing homelessness.

The following feedback was heard:

- Homelessness is an issue in Aurora and residents need support to find and keep housing
- People experiencing homelessness are community members
- There is an urgent need in the community for housing
- A growing number of individuals seeking emergency housing in York Region work full-time but still cannot afford the high cost of housing
- Interest in creating an emergency and transitional housing agreement between the Region, Town of Aurora and service provider, similar to the agreement that was put in place in Durham Region
- Homelessness exists and needs to be addressed; all municipalities in York Region should do their part to support

Community Safety

The following questions were heard:

- Whether the surrounding neighbourhood will be less safe
- If there will be on-site security measures
- Concern about increase in crime in Aurora

The following feedback was also heard:

- Any community member can make a neighbourhood less safe
- You cannot put a single face on homelessness
- When individuals access emergency housing, there are rules to be followed. Emergency housing is not a fit for everyone and when it is not, operators work with partners across the Region to provide other types of support
- Building design and site plans have been developed using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, which reduces crime by shaping the environment around residents
- The building would be equipped with a security system and monitored 24/7

Location, Site Selection and Impact

The following questions were heard:

- Queries about alternative site locations, both within Aurora and the broader York Region, that might be more suitable or have existing similar uses

- Concern that Aurora is getting too crowded, and the community services will not have capacity to keep up with the growing population, such as lack of spaces for children at the local community centre
- If there will be designated resources to support people with accessing nearby health services, such as dental, mental health and or addiction support
- Inquiries about the rationale behind the site's location and its proximity to various amenities and public spaces
- How the proposed development could impact property values in the surrounding neighbourhoods
- Whether there will be an increase in noise, which may exceed the allowable limit
- How the future Metrolinx construction could impact pedestrian access to services
- Concern that building this facility beside the planned sewage pumping station is insensitive to the facility's residents

The following feedback was also heard:

- The proposed location is appropriate (slightly outside of the core, close to transit, easy to walk to stores and medical services)
- It is important to be near a transportation route
- The proposed building would be located 34 metres from the Henderson Sewage Pumping Station; well within standard practice across York Region

Programming and Services

The following questions were heard:

- About the day-to-day operations of the site, including the number of beds, the nature of the drop-in program and staff qualifications
- Whether there is a guarantee of funding to support the services offered at this facility to provide to clients and the community
- Whether the facility will serve Aurora residents
- Lack of background information about the people who will be staying at this facility

The following feedback was also heard:

- The facility would be operated and staffed 24/7 by a community-based service provider

Environmental Impacts of Development

The following questions were heard:

- Lack of clarity on how the facility fits within the [Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan](#) and local policy frameworks
- Whether the trees that are being removed be replaced and if there are at-risk tree species known to be living in the area
- How the animals living on the site will be protected and whether they will be relocated
- Discussion about the development and negative impacts on the environment and Oak Ridges Moraine
- How the Henderson Pumping Station will cause odours and is too close to the proposed building
- Whether there be increased litter in the surrounding community
- Concern about construction on the Oak Ridges Moraine also surfaced when the existing subdivision was in the planning stage

The following feedback was also heard:

- In accordance with requirements set by the Town of Aurora and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, each tree removed will be replaced with two new trees to meet the required 2:1 tree planting ratio
- The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has confirmed there are no associated impacts to trees
- The natural core and natural linkage areas will continue to be protected and provide animal habitat
- Any new development can impact the environment
- Being close to nature and the surrounding environment acts as a calming factor for future clients
- The building would meet all noise and odour standards set by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Existing Infrastructure

The following questions were heard:

- Discussion about the adequacy of parking and the accessibility of a planned public park adjacent to the facility
- Significant concerns about sidewalk connectivity and lack of sidewalks on Yonge Street from the site across the railway
- How the facility is too close to the railway tracks
- How the development will increase traffic and does not conform with transportation policies for ingress/egress onto Yonge Street
- How there are very few affordable housing options in Aurora for clients leaving the emergency and transitional housing facility
- How future clients will access services as there are limited employment opportunities and medical services nearby

The following feedback was also heard:

- Proximity to transit routes will support travel to employment, social and medical services in other parts of the Region
- Existing transit routes will allow for safe and accessible transportation to and from the facility
- Municipal servicing at this site can accommodate a new building

Building and Site Design

The following questions were heard:

- Need to address specifically what changes have been made to the design since January 2023
- The redevelopment of Porter Place and why the existing location can't be renovated to accommodate a new facility
- Need for outdoor amenity space at the new location and potential for recreational space (such as some basketball courts, etc.) to provide opportunity for outdoor activities for residents staying in emergency and transitional housing
- How the proposed building will be too tall
- Fencing is needed around the perimeter of the property

- The development will impact the low-density residential community character
- These lands do not have density allowance for further housing

The following feedback was also heard:

- Town of Aurora’s Technical Review provided no major revisions with the proposed development in the Region’s third submission for the Zoning By-law Amendment application
- Comments received from the Town of Aurora focused on the following information:
 - Traffic and Parking – clarifying parking study findings
 - Architectural Design Package – clarifying parking isles

Communications and Engagement with Nearby Residents

The following questions were heard:

- Requests from community members on how to best support the project
- How this project can move forward as quickly as possible
- More information to consult with the community should be considered
- Suggestions for improvements in presentation materials, especially in clarifying key points like the significance of the “Aurora Promenade” and details of the proposed site
- Comments that notice of upcoming meetings was provided at the last-minute

The following feedback was also heard:

- York.ca provides valuable information and resources. Positive reception to the customer service approach at the Community Open House and the quick depletion of informational packages, indicating high community interest
- Town of Aurora residents were notified of the project through direct mail, social media, signage and print advertising
- Various channels informed attendees about the open house, with community letters and word-of-mouth being particularly effective
- Support for this facility, location and the need to address homelessness

HOW TO STAY CONNECTED

For more information, answers to frequently asked questions, details on how to get involved and to sign up for updates, visit york.ca/14452Yonge

If you have questions or would like to learn more about this proposed emergency and transitional housing development, please contact the Community Liaison at 289-338-8063 or 14452Yonge@york.ca