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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

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From: Commissioner of Social Services  
Report: #2025-INFO-08  
Date: January 31, 2025

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**Subject:**

1635 Dundas Street East: Phase 2 Community Engagement

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**Recommendation:**

Receive for information

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Phase 2: 1635 Dundas Street East Community Engagement Feedback.

**2. Background**

2.1 The Regional Municipality of Durham (Region) is legislated by the province of Ontario as a Service System Manager for Housing and Homelessness and designated by the federal government as the Community Entity.

2.2 The 1635 Dundas Street East project is a multi-phase initiative aimed at providing safe and inclusive housing support solutions to help people who need it most.

2.3 Phase 1 implementation of the project was approved as part of the initial Regional Council approval to purchase the site in June 2023. Phase 1 includes a 45-bed low barrier, pet friendly shelter. This modernized emergency shelter site allows patrons 24-hour access to the site. The shelter is operated by Christian Faith Outreach Centre (CFOC). There are support services onsite to help patrons reach their goals.

2.4 The Region and CFOC welcomed the first patrons on March 20, 2024. In 2024, the shelter provided a safe and supportive environment to over 100 unique individuals. The occupancy rate has been at capacity since opening.

- 2.5 On June 26, 2024, Social Services Department and LGA Architectural Partners presented at Regional Council to share an overview of the current program use at 1635 Dundas Street East, [Phase 1 Community Engagement](#) results and future engagement strategies, and to share conceptual design for future phases.
- 2.6 Phase 2 focuses on implementing the community feedback received in Phase 1 by creating housing units with health and social supports and services.
- 2.7 A Phase 2 Community Engagement Survey was created in collaboration with the 1635 Dundas Community Liaison Committee and was available to residents on [Your Durham](#), from June 27 to September 27, 2024. Residents were able to provide feedback and insights with suggestions while informing the design and implementation of the facility.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 In June of 2023, Regional Council approved Report #2023-COW-31, directing staff to negotiate the acquisition of 1635 Dundas Street East in the Town of Whitby.
- 3.2 On November 29, 2023, Durham Region and the Town of Whitby reached an agreement related to 1635 Dundas Street, Report [# 2023-A-18](#).

### **4. Marketing and Communications**

- 4.1 During Phase 2 engagement, residents were notified of the survey through various channels to help reach a broader audience and ensure everyone had an opportunity to provide input.
- 4.2 A Public Service Announcement (PSA) was issued on June 27, to all Durham Region channels and shared with media.
  - a. The PSA was picked up by Durham Radio News and shared on the radio news segment for 107.7FM and 1580 AM on June 28.
    - Your Durham was updated to include the survey for participants to fill out.
    - A Briefing Note was shared with Council members on June 27.
- 4.3 Durham Radio News ads ran from September 9 to 13, 2024. This includes the ads played on several radio stations:
  - a. 107.7 FM, CKDO – The ad was played 15 times to 42,000 listeners.
  - b. 94.9 The Rock – The ad was played 15 times to 121,900 listeners.
  - c. KC 96 FM – the ad was played 15 times to 184,800 listeners.
- 4.4 Digital ads ran on Metroland from September 9 to 15, 2024:

- a. Ads were delivered to a total of 50,502 targeted displayed impressions to a Region of Durham news audience.
  - b. 44,312 users interacted with the ads, demonstrating strong engagement.
  - c. 94 users took immediate action by clicking through to Your Durham.
- 4.5 The final Click-Through Rate of 0.18 per cent exceeded the Canadian average benchmark.
- 4.6 A colour print ad was placed in Brooklin Town Crier and distributed to 8,000 residents.
- 4.7 A community flyer was mailed to 1,337 Whitby residents.
- 4.8 Social media messages were shared on X (Twitter), Facebook and LinkedIn until September 27 and resulted in the following engagement:
- a. 54 per cent engagement rate.
  - b. 77.1 per cent impression rate.
  - c. 82.3 per cent clicked on the post link.
- 4.9 Newsletter articles were shared in Durham Region's Corporate Newsletter and This Week in Durham. This Week in Durham's newsletter is distributed to 1,374 subscribers in Durham Region.
- 4.10 Durham.ca included a banner on the homepage to promote the survey.

## **5. Phase 2 Community Engagement Survey Results**

- 5.1 The Phase 2 Community Engagement Survey received a total of 353 survey responses.
- a. A majority of responses were from homeowners (69 per cent).
  - b. A majority of responses lived in Whitby, ON (71 per cent).
  - c. A majority of responses were from 65 to 69 years of age (27.3 per cent).
- 5.2 The feedback received noted:
- a. The concept plans in the video were helpful and informative.
  - b. The following programming and services were identified the most by respondents as missing in Phase 1 that should be expanded or included in Phase 2:
    - Addictions and substance use (recovery, rehab programming);
    - Supports for specific populations (seniors, women, children, victims of human trafficking); and
    - Life skills (obtaining ID, education)
- 5.3 Several respondents asked for volunteer and donation opportunities.

## **6. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

a. Goal 2 – Community Vitality:

- Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing.
- Enhance community safety and well-being.
- Influence the social determinants of health to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations.
- Support a high quality of life for all through human services delivery.
- Build a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

b. Goal 4 – Social Investment

- Revitalize community housing and improve housing choice, affordability and sustainability.
- Build awareness and community capacity to address poverty.
- Demonstrate leadership in poverty prevention.
- Expand access to existing life stabilization programs.

c. Goal 5 – Service Excellence

- Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value.
- Collaborate for a seamless service experience.
- Demonstrate commitment to continuous quality improvement and communicating results.

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1 As per the Regional Municipality of Durham and Town of Whitby agreement, 1635 Dundas Community Engagement Feedback updates are provided to Regional and Town of Whitby Councils on community engagement strategies. The feedback is a component of the information used to develop the 1635 Dundas Street East Phase 2 plans.

7.2 The Phase 2 Community Engagement report will be presented at the Town of Whitby Council on February 3, 2025.

## **8. Attachments**

Attachment #1: 1635 Dundas Street East: Phase 2 Community Engagement Feedback Report

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou  
Commissioner of Social Services



# 1635 Dundas Street East: Phase 2

## Community Engagement Feedback



## Background

The 1635 Dundas Street East project is a multi-phase initiative aimed at providing safe and inclusive housing support solutions to help people who need it most. As part of the Housing Continuum, the low barrier shelter at 1635 Dundas Street East plays a pivotal role in facilitating the transition of individuals through various stages of housing, offering not only immediate shelter, but also access to support services that help move people toward stable, long-term housing and self-sufficiency.

### The Housing Continuum



Figure 1. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2024.

In August 2023, Durham Region began preparing the former Sunnycrest Nursing Home, now referred to as 1635 Dundas, to be a location for temporary housing with wraparound supports. The building has several residential rooms with washroom facilities, common areas for support programs and services, and a private outdoor space. A 45-bed low barrier shelter with wraparound supports opened in the building at the end of March 2024, as part of the Phase 1 implementation of the project. The occupancy rate has been at or near capacity since opening. Operated by Christian Faith Outreach Centre (CFOC), the shelter has provided a safe and supportive environment to 150 unique individuals as of September 2024. CFOC provides a wide range of on-site supports and services that aims to help patrons get back on their feet, including:

- Mental health and addictions supports;
- Harm reduction support services, housing, and employment assistance;
- Medical support services;
- Arts programming; and
- Life skills programming.

To ensure the ongoing success and positive impact of the project, the 1635 Dundas Community Liaison Committee was established and meets monthly to share information, identify issues, and create mitigation strategies to promote successful integration of the low barrier shelter, and its patrons, into the broader community. This committee plays an essential role in fostering communication, addressing any emerging challenges, and strengthening community relationships.

As part of Durham Region's ongoing commitment to ensuring that the 1635 Dundas project aligns with the needs and priorities of the community, Phase 1 of the engagement process gathered valuable input from community members (see [1635 Dundas Phase 1: Community Engagement Infographic](#)). During Phase 1 engagement, the community identified areas of need including:

- Individual housing options;
- Programming supports to ensure physical, mental and addiction health needs are met; and
- Partnerships with service providers to support growth opportunities for people including life skills and employment options.

Phase 2 now focuses on implementing the feedback from community engagement in Phase 1 by creating housing units with health and social supports and services. By building a continuum of housing on site, 1635 Dundas Street East will provide transitional housing for those experiencing homelessness, supportive housing for those requiring specialized services, and accommodations for independent living.

## Phase 2 Community Engagement Survey

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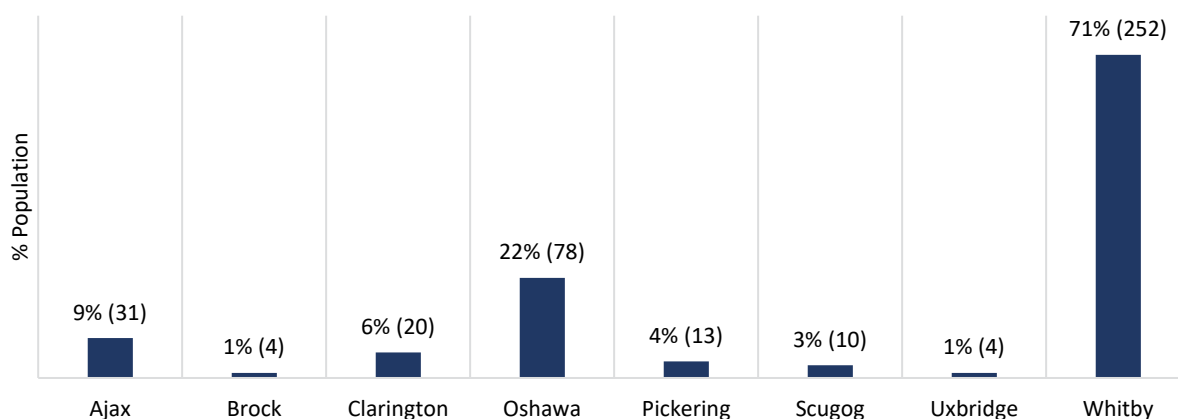
As the project transitions to Phase 2, a Community Engagement Survey ([Appendix A](#)) was launched to gather input from the community that will inform the planning and development of the next phase for 1635 Dundas Street East. The survey was created with the Community Liaison Committee. It was made available on Durham Region's [Your Durham](#) platform, and paper copies were also distributed throughout the community to ensure broad participation. Residents were notified of the survey through various channels including news, radio, digital and print advertisements, newsletters, community flyers, and social media to help reach a broader audience and ensure everyone was informed and had an opportunity to provide input. The survey included both qualitative and quantitative questions and was made available from June 27 to September 27, 2024.



## Demographics

The Phase 2 Community Engagement Survey received a total of 353 survey responses. The survey aimed to capture a broad range of perspectives from individuals with a connection to the area. The majority of responses were from the Whitby community (71 per cent, n = 252), either residing, working, or attending school within the community. Additionally, a significant number of survey responses were from neighbouring municipalities, including Oshawa (22 per cent, n = 78) and Ajax (9 per cent, n = 31) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Community Identity: Residents' Connection to Durham Region**



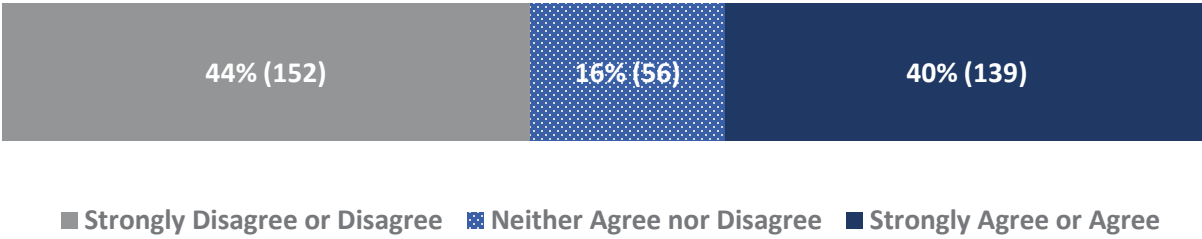
\*Respondents could select multiple answers, therefore the total percentage exceeds 100 per cent.

A majority of survey responses were from homeowners (69 per cent, n = 242), followed by renters (18 per cent, n = 64), business owners (3 per cent, n = 12), unsheltered individuals (3 per cent, n = 9), and living in supportive or affordable housing (2 per cent, n = 7). A total of 7 per cent of responses (n = 26) indicated “Other.”

## Phase 1 Implementation

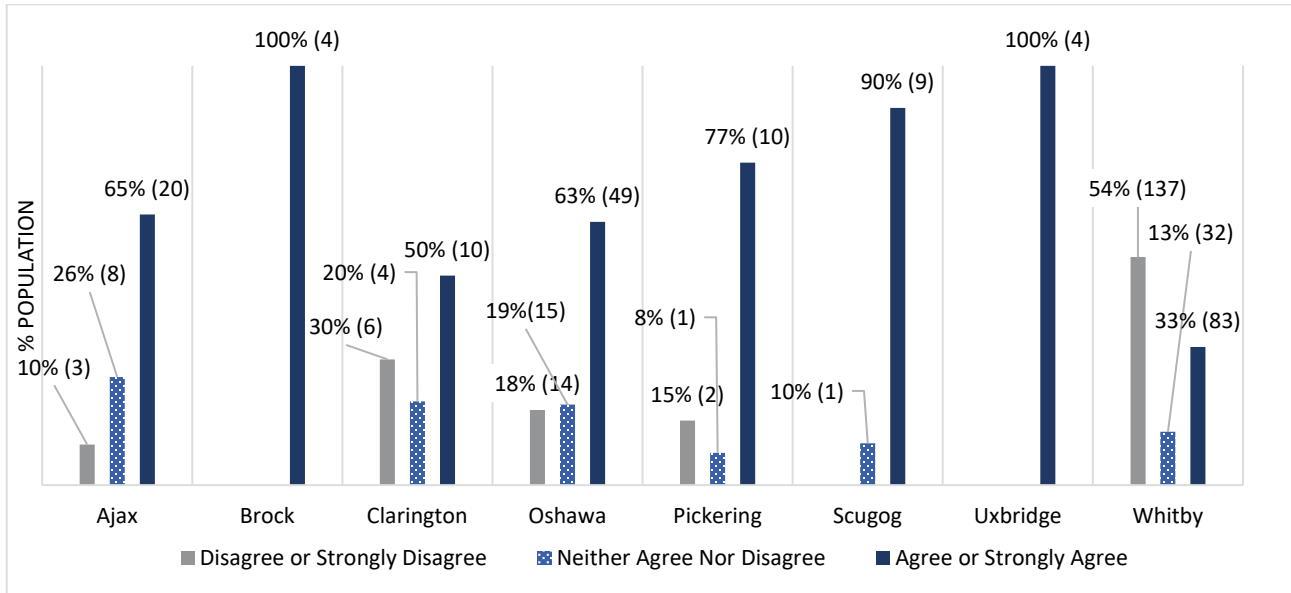
As part of the engagement process, it was important to understand community members' perceptions of Phase 1 and how well the low barrier shelter at 1635 Dundas Street East has integrated into the local area. Community member responses to the question, “I feel that the low barrier shelter at 1635 Dundas Street East has integrated well into the community,” showed a mixed outlook. 40 per cent (n = 139) of responses either strongly agreed or agreed, and 16 per cent (n = 56) were neutral, indicating a good level of support or openness to the shelter's integration. 44 per cent (n = 152) expressed some level of disagreement, providing an opportunity for continued engagement and efforts to enhance understanding and community support.

**Figure 3. “I feel that the low barrier shelter at 1635 Dundas Street East has integrated well into the community...” n = 347**



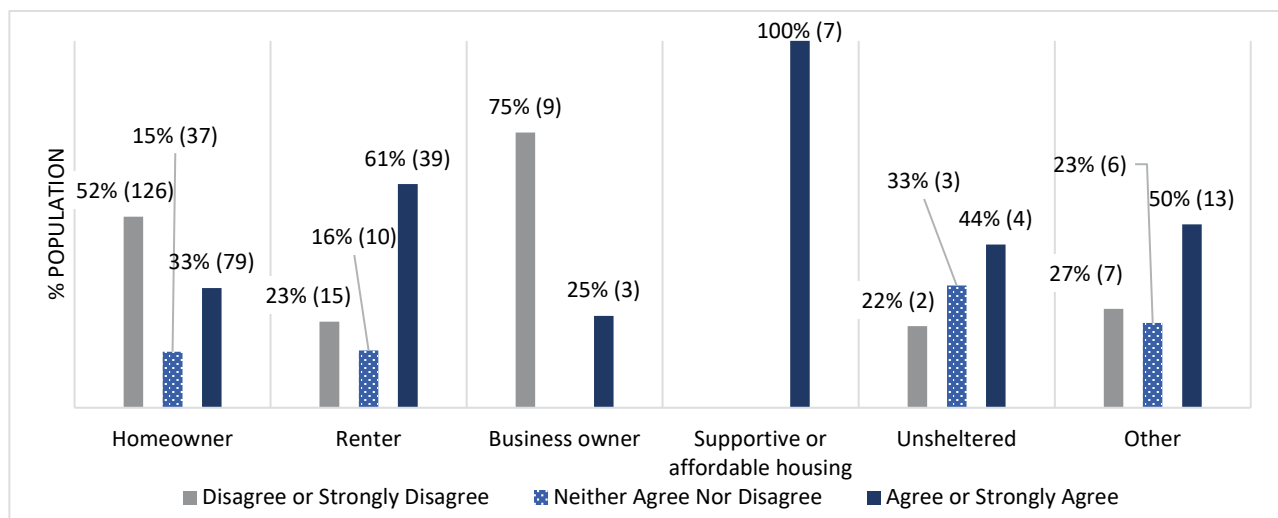
When further analyzed by municipality, there were notable differences in how residents perceived the shelter’s integration (Figure 4). In Whitby, where the shelter is located, 54 per cent (n = 137) of responses expressed disagreement with the statement, indicating opportunity for further communication and community outreach to address local concerns. However, responses from other municipalities in Durham Region showed a more positive outlook, with lower levels of disagreement. These variations in perception, particularly in Whitby, illustrate an opportunity to continue to provide ongoing tailored information to address specific local concerns. This can be addressed and leveraged through ongoing communication resources and the 1635 Dundas Community Liaison Committee, which has been established to facilitate communication, address neighbourhood concerns, and implement strategies to mitigate any potential impacts on the surrounding community.

**Figure 4: The low barrier shelter at 1635 Dundas Street East was well integrated into the community - by municipality**



Similarly, there were differences in how individuals perceived the integration of 1635 Dundas Street East into the community, particularly based on their “community identity” (Figure 5). Notably, business owners (75 per cent, n = 9) expressed more levels of disagreement compared to other groups, indicating that there is an opportunity to engage this group further to address their specific needs and questions. Conversely, renters (61 per cent, n = 39) expressed more positive views on the low barrier shelter’s integration. Homeowners had a mixed response, with 52 per cent (n = 126) expressing disagreement and 33 per cent (n = 79) expressing agreement. While these responses reflect a range of opinions, they also present a valuable opportunity to enhance communication and build stronger connections.

**Figure 5: The low barrier shelter at 1635 Dundas Street East is well integrated into the community - by community identity**



## Phase 2: Community needs and implementation

As the project transitions to Phase 2, it is important to continue to prioritize community input to ensure the program evolves in a way that meets critical needs. To build on the feedback from Phase 1, participants were asked to identify any additional services or supports they feel are missing from Phase 1 to be included in Phase 2 (Table 1).

“Emphasis on substance abuse and rehab services. The community has been seeing many individuals use substances in bus sheds, nearby parks, the Whitby mall.”

-Survey respondent

“I think this covers many areas needed, but I hope multiple agencies and access points will be provided to the individuals seeking assistance, so they can determine the supports best suited to them (i.e. not providing all the supports through a few individuals/agencies).”

-Survey respondent

**Table 1: Top 10 identified by respondents for expanding or enhancing programming\*\***

Rank	Program
1.	Addictions and substance use (recovery, rehab programming)
2.	Supports for specific populations (seniors, women, children, victims of human trafficking)
3.	Life skills (obtaining ID, education)
4.	Forming connections with the community (volunteering, public education)
5.	Transition supports (followup supports for clients after they leave the shelter)
6.	Housing (finding permanent housing)
7.	Health care (clinic services, dental care)
8.	Employment services (job searching, interviews)
9.	Safety and security (community safety programs)
10.	Wraparound supports (hosting multiple services on site)

\*\*Ranked by highest frequency, with 1 indicating the most mentioned desired services and supports.

Overall, the feedback gathered in Phase 2 reinforced the needs identified in Phase 1 and provided a deeper understanding of specific gaps in services. Many respondents expressed a desire for more comprehensive, accessible, and community-centred programming to address a broad range of social, economic, and personal challenges.

Respondents also had the opportunity to watch the June 2024 Regional Council meeting that presented plans for Phase 2, including concept drawings and information. The video clip was posted on the Your Durham website and survey page. Respondents were asked if they had any thoughts they would like to share regarding the development and implementation of 1635 Dundas Street East. Respondents provided valuable feedback on the development and implementation of the project, focusing on several key themes. These included understanding the impact of the low barrier shelter on the broader community, particularly related to safety and integration, as well as the need for enhanced supports for addiction and substance use. Additionally, suggestions were made to ensure the design and use of space will better serve residents and promote a positive relationship with the surrounding neighbourhood.

## Most frequently cited thoughts on concept plans for Phase 2:



“What I’ve seen in the past and the current videos and what the community saying is things have gone well it’s in a great location which doesn’t interfere with a lot of other parts of the community that need to thrive and continue to succeed I think it’s a great use of a building and I think better things will come up as things go along.”  
 -Survey respondent

“Yes - I think it’s very optimistic to think that it will be safe to house recovering addicts, families, seniors and human trafficking victims all under one roof. Sounds like a great concept but I think much more consideration needs to be given to the safety of the residents and the community by putting all of these people together in one common space.”  
 -Survey respondent

Key questions were also raised by respondents via the survey. Many of these questions have been thoughtfully considered and addressed in the development and planning of 1635 Dundas Street East. In response, several key strategies have been implemented to ensure that concerns are proactively managed and incorporated into the design and operations. The following table outlines the specific questions raised by respondents, along with the corresponding strategies developed to address them (Table 2).

**Table 2: Key respondent questions and implementation strategies**

Question	Strategy
What will the impact be on the broader community around 1635 Dundas Street East?	A 1635 Dundas Community Liaison Committee has been established to facilitate communication, address neighbourhood concerns, and implement strategies to mitigate any potential impacts on the surrounding community.

Question	Strategy
<p>What is being done to ensure community safety and mitigate crime?</p>	<p>Appropriate safety and security measures implemented that align with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles (e.g. security cameras, lighting, privacy fence, staff support). Additionally, the 24/7 Regional Street Outreach program connects unsheltered residents with essential services. A dedicated email (Homelesshelp@Durham.ca) and phone line (311 extension 5510) (monitored 24/7) has been established to address community inquiries and concerns.</p>
<p>What supports are in place for addiction and substance use?</p>	<p>1635 Dundas Street East offers wraparound services tailored to the individual needs of residents, including counselling, health services, employment support, financial assistance, food security, life skills training, and mental health programming. Formal collaborations with community partners have been developed to provide a wide range of on site supports and services to help patrons get back on their feet, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health and addictions support provided by Lakeridge Health/Pinewood;</li> <li>• Harm reduction support services, housing, and employment assistance provided by John Howard Society;</li> <li>• Medical support provided by Durham Community Health Centre (DCHC);</li> <li>• Social assistance and life skills training;</li> <li>• Arts programming; and</li> <li>• We Grow Food Gardening project.</li> </ul> <p>As the development of 1635 Dundas Street East continues, additional supports and services will be introduced to further enhance access.</p>
<p>What is the most effective way to design this space?</p>	<p>The Phase 2 conceptual design prioritizes the creation of individual and specialized supportive housing units, tailored to community needs such as palliative care, recovery, and rehabilitation programs.</p>

## Conclusion

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1635 Dundas Street East is part of a broader, innovative approach to homelessness—focused on a “housing-first” model that offers not only shelter, but also access to critical health and social supports. This approach provides residents with the tools and resources they need to regain stability, secure employment, and transition to long-term housing solutions.

As the initiative moves forward, it is important to acknowledge the diverse perspectives within the community. While feedback has been generally balanced, some residents, particularly in Whitby where 1635 Dundas Street East is located, have expressed concerns about the shelter’s integration. Additionally, homeowners and business owners have voiced mixed opinions, with some feeling more apprehensive than those who rent, unsheltered, or living in supportive or affordable housing. Many of these concerns stem from misconceptions or lack of awareness about homelessness. These varying viewpoints highlight the importance of ongoing dialogue and continued engagement with all community members.

Since its opening on March 20, 2024, Phase 1 has been successfully providing much-needed support to our community, operating at capacity with 45 beds available for individuals experiencing homelessness. Between March and September 2024, 20 individuals at 1635 Dundas Street East moved into stable housing and are connected with housing retention workers to help them to maintain their housing. This marks a significant step forward in addressing the Region’s homelessness crisis. With planning for Phase 2 of the project now started, the community engagement will be applied, expanding the project to include a variety of supportive and transitional housing units and wraparound supports, such as health services, social programs, and employment assistance.

# Appendix A

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## 1635 Dundas Street East Phase 2 Community Engagement Survey

1. Please select the descriptor that best describes your community identity. I live, work or attend school in Durham Region:

Ajax  
Brock  
Clarington  
Oshawa  
Pickering  
Scugog  
Uxbridge  
Whitby  
I live outside of Durham Region

2. Please select the descriptor that best describes your community identity. I am a:

Homeowner  
I rent my home  
I am a business owner  
I live in supportive or affordable housing  
I am currently unsheltered and am staying outdoors, in my car, with a friend or family member  
Other (please specify)

3. With the 45-bed low barrier shelter now open, we want to hear your feedback about how the shelter has integrated into the community. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), please rate your level of agreement with the following statement:

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

4. The program services listed below are what we heard from the Phase 1 community engagement as a need in our community. Please list any programming supports you feel are missing:

- Case management for patrons.
- Counselling and mental health services.
- General Counselling services.
- Addiction and substance use treatment.



- Health care services.
- Life Skills Training (e.g., budgeting, cooking, job readiness). Employment services.
- Literacy and educational support.
- Food supports and nutritional programs.
- Community engagement and social activities (e.g., wellness activities, community gardening).
- Housing placement and retention support.
- Peer support and mentorship.

5. Have you viewed the concept plans in the video shared on the Your Durham website? Please provide any comments you may have: