

HATS Project

HATS Project: Proposed Tiny Home Development

Site Suitability Analysis for a Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS) Community

Location: 2300 Brampton Street, Hamilton, Ontario

Motion: A notice of motion was presented at the General Issues Committee meeting on January 15, 2025, by Councillor T. McKeekin, proposing the development of a tiny home community at 2300 Brampton Street.

This document presents a comprehensive analysis outlining the reasons why the proposed site at 2300 Brampton Street is considered unsuitable for this development. The analysis is structured into three sections:

1. Client-Related Concerns
2. Environmental and Ecological Considerations
3. Negative Residential Impacts

Aerial view of proposed site-2300 Brampton Street



Aerial view of proposed site-2300 Brampton Street



1. CLIENT/HOMELESS IMPACT

Here are some of the reasons why this location would be an unsuitable site for a homeless shelter.

1.1 SAFETY CONCERNS

Seclusion and Limited Access: The site is isolated, with only two access points (Rennie St. and Brampton St.), creating a potential security risk. This limited access could also hinder emergency response times.

Increased Traffic and Potential for Conflict: The limited access points would likely increase traffic in the area, potentially leading to increased negative encounters between residents and the local community.

Inadequate Lighting: Poor lighting in the area would compromise the safety of residents, particularly at night.

Predatory Activity: Poor lighting creates ideal conditions for criminals to operate unnoticed. Homeless individuals in poorly lit areas are more vulnerable to assaults, robberies, and other forms of violence.

Lack of Visibility: Secluded locations offer criminals greater opportunity to target individuals without fear of being seen or interrupted.

1.2 HEIGHTENED RISK OF HARM

Physical Assaults: The lack of visibility and security in poorly lit, secluded areas increases the risk of physical and sexual assault.

Exposure to the Elements: Inadequate lighting and shelter in secluded areas can expose homeless individuals to extreme weather conditions, increasing their risk of hypothermia, heatstroke, and other health problems.

1.3 MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

Increased Anxiety and Fear: Living in constant fear of crime and harm can significantly impact the mental health of homeless individuals, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and trauma.

Social Isolation: Seclusion can lead to social isolation, further exacerbating mental health issues and hindering access to support services. Bus service is unreliable, requiring multiple transfers for essential errands such as grocery shopping, doctor appointments, etc.

Transportation: The nearest bus stop is located at least 850 meters away from the site, requiring a minimum 10-minute walk. This location may not be accessible for individuals who rely on bus routes to access essential services and amenities.

Difficulty Accessing Help/ Delayed Emergency Response: In emergencies, poor lighting and seclusion can delay the arrival of emergency responders, potentially putting lives at risk.

Limited Visibility for Help-Seeking: Individuals in need of assistance may have difficulty attracting attention or flagging down help in poorly lit and secluded areas.

Proximity to Red Hill Valley Trail: The trail is not adequately patrolled and has existing safety concerns. Introducing a vulnerable population could further exacerbate these issues.

Lack of Infrastructure and Amenities: The area lacks essential infrastructure, such as businesses and nearby amenities, which would limit residents' access to necessities and support services.

Mental Health Concerns: The lack of adequate support services and the isolated nature of the site could pose significant challenges for individuals with mental health issues. I believe this proposal is fundamentally flawed as it fails to prioritize the needs and perspectives of individuals experiencing homelessness. This includes being close to social and health services, which offers several key advantages:

- **Improved Access to Care:** Proximity makes it easier for individuals experiencing homelessness to access essential services like mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, medical care, job training programs, support groups, food banks etc.
- **Reduced Barriers to Care:** Transportation can be a significant barrier for homeless individuals. Locating shelters near services reduces the need for extensive travel, saving time and resources.
- **Increased Stability and Well-being:** Access to consistent care helps address underlying issues contributing to homelessness, such as addiction, mental health conditions and chronic illnesses. This can improve overall health, stability, and the chances of long-term housing solutions.

Access to Essential Services: Individuals experiencing homelessness require readily available access to essential services for several critical reasons. These services are crucial for improving overall well-being, increasing stability, and reducing the likelihood of relapse into homelessness.

- **Improved Health Outcomes:** Proximity to medical clinics, hospitals, and mental health services ensures timely access to treatment for physical and mental health conditions, which are often exacerbated by homelessness.
- Regular check-ups and preventative care can help address chronic health issues and prevent further complications
- **Reduced Stigma and Isolation:** Integrating shelters within a network of services can help reduce the stigma often associated with homelessness. It also fosters a sense of community and belonging among residents.
- **Enhanced Stability and Well-being:** Access to counseling, addiction support, and other mental health services can help individuals address underlying issues contributing to homelessness, such as trauma, addiction, or mental health disorders.

Access to Employment Services & Increased Opportunity for Self-Sufficiency: Proximity to job training programs, employment services, and social support agencies facilitates access to resources that can help individuals gain the skills and support necessary to find and maintain employment. This can lead to increased financial stability and a pathway out of homelessness.

Reduced Barriers to Access: Transportation can be a significant barrier for individuals experiencing homelessness. Locating essential services within proximity reduces the logistical and financial burden of accessing these vital supports.

Improved Quality of Life: Access to essential services contributes to a more dignified and humane experience for individuals experiencing homelessness. It allows them to address their basic needs, improve their health, and work towards a more stable and fulfilling life.

In conclusion, locating homeless shelters and support services near essential services is crucial for improving the health, well-being, and overall quality of life for individuals experiencing homelessness.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL/ECOLOGICAL IMPACT:

A development of tiny homes directly at the entrance of the Red Hill Valley Trail in Brampton would have significant negative impacts on the ecological and environmental balance of this valuable natural area.

Habitat Fragmentation: The construction itself would disrupt existing habitats, potentially harming or displacing wildlife. The presence of homes and human activity would fragment the natural landscape, making it harder for animals to move freely and find food and resources.

Increased Traffic and Noise: Increased traffic associated with the development would disturb wildlife and potentially introduce pollutants into the environment. Noise pollution from the development could disrupt the natural soundscape and negatively impact wildlife behaviour. The presence of encampments along the Red Hill Valley Trail has had a discernible impact on wildlife. Residents have observed a notable decline in the presence of certain species, such as bunnies and coyotes, within the area.

Impact on Water Quality: Development could increase runoff and erosion, potentially impacting the water quality of the nearby creeks and rivers that feed into the Red Hill Valley. Septic systems or other wastewater solutions could also pose a risk to water quality if not properly managed.

Loss of Green Space: The development would result in the loss of valuable green space, reducing the overall ecological function of the valley.

Disturbance to Wildlife: Human activity associated with the development would likely disturb wildlife, including nesting birds, foraging animals, and migrating species. It's crucial to consider these potential impacts and prioritize the protection of the Red Hill Valley Trail.

Thorough Environmental Assessment: A comprehensive environmental impact assessment is essential to fully understand the potential consequences of the development.

Alternative Locations: Explore alternative locations for the tiny home development that minimize environmental impact.

Mitigation Measures: If the development proceeds, implement strong mitigation measures to minimize the impact on wildlife and the environment. This could include:

- Creating wildlife corridors.
- Implementing noise reduction measures.
- Utilizing sustainable building practices and materials.
- Careful stormwater management.

Protecting the Red Hill Valley Trail is crucial for the long-term health of the ecosystem and the well-being of the community. The Red Hill Valley Trail in Hamilton, Ontario, should be protected for several critical reasons, explained below.

2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Hotspot: The valley is a vital ecological corridor, home to diverse plant and animal life, including many at-risk species. Protecting it safeguards this biodiversity and contributes to the overall health of the local ecosystem.

Water Quality: The valley plays a crucial role in water filtration and flood control. Protecting it helps maintain clean water sources and minimizes the impact of flooding on surrounding communities.

Carbon Sequestration: Forests within the valley act as carbon sinks, helping to mitigate climate change. Preserving these forests is crucial for carbon sequestration and air quality.

2.2 RECREATIONAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Outdoor Recreation: The trail offers numerous recreational opportunities for residents, including hiking, biking, birdwatching, and nature photography.

Mental and Physical Health: Access to green spaces like the Red Hill Valley has been shown to improve mental and physical health, reducing stress and promoting well-being – opportunities that are already being diminished for residents who feel unsafe on these paths due to the rise of homelessness in the area.

Community Hub: The trail should serve as a valuable community gathering space, connecting people with nature, and fostering a sense of peace.

2.3 CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL VALUE

Indigenous Heritage: The valley holds significant cultural and historical importance for Indigenous peoples. Protecting it honors their connection to the land and preserves their cultural heritage.

Historical Significance: The valley may contain archeological sites and historical remnants, providing valuable insights into the region's past.

2.4 ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Tourism: The trail attracts visitors to the area, boosting local tourism and supporting the local economy.

Property Values: The presence of a well-maintained green space like the Red Hill Valley can enhance property values in surrounding neighborhoods.

In summary, protecting the Red Hill Valley Trail is essential for environmental, social, cultural, and economic reasons. This is an asset to the Hamilton community and should be preserved for future generations.

3. IMPACT ON RESIDENTS

The proposed HATS (25 bunkies) site at 2300 Brampton Street will pose substantial risks to the residents. Concentrating resources in a single location can be problematic, and the negative impacts of such shelters/short term housing can include:

Increased safety concerns and crime: Potential for heightened crime rates, including property damage, theft, and violence (assaults).

Environmental impacts: Concerns regarding material usage, waste generation, and construction activities, as well as potential for detrimental interactions between people and the environment.

Law Enforcement: Increased police presence may result from frequent service calls, leading to a higher workload for both police services and potentially the court system.

EMS: Increase in emergency medical service (EMS) calls, such as ambulance and fire department calls, is a potential risk associated with the concentration of homeless shelters in residential area.

Increased medical needs: Individuals experiencing homelessness often face significant health challenges, including chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, and substance abuse issues. These conditions can lead to increased medical emergencies requiring ambulance transport.

Substance Abuse: The concentration of individuals experiencing homelessness can sometimes lead to an increase in drug overdoses and related emergencies, requiring rapid medical response.

Mental Health Crises: Individuals experiencing homelessness may be more susceptible to mental health crises, which can sometimes require emergency intervention by both EMS and law enforcement.

Increased Risk of Fires: Shelters, especially those with high occupancy, may have an increased risk of fire due to factors such as inadequate fire safety measures or accidental incidents.

Increased Demand on Resources: A surge in EMS calls can strain local resources, potentially leading to longer response times for other emergencies in the community.

Demand for Services: this site can increase the demand for social services like mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and emergency medical response.

Families with children: No community discussions have been held regarding this matter. Furthermore, the area has experienced an influx of new families with school-aged children, raising significant concerns.

Property Value Depreciation: The potential for this site, may negatively impact property values, and residents may worry about the impact fearing it will decrease desirability and investment in the neighbourhood.

Noise and Disturbances: Increased foot traffic, loitering, increased littering, encampments, drug use, discarded paraphernalia, and potential for noise disturbances, can negatively impact the peace and quiet of residential neighbourhoods.

Increased Sanitation Issues: Potential for increased litter, public urination/defecation, and other sanitation concerns.

Negative Perceptions: Some businesses may experience negative perceptions from customers due to the proximity of the site.

Economic: The perception of increased crime, safety concerns, and potential negative impacts on the local economy can deter businesses from locating in or expanding within a neighbourhood with a concentrated shelter.

Reduced Investment: Businesses may avoid investing in the area, leading to fewer new businesses opening and existing ones potentially relocating.

Lower Property Values: As mentioned earlier, the presence of a shelter can impact property values negatively. This can discourage property development and investment, further hindering economic growth.

Reduced Tax Revenue: Fewer businesses and lower property values can result in decreased tax revenue for the local government, impacting funding for essential services that benefit the entire community

Traffic Congestion: Increased traffic flow from shelter staff, volunteers, and service providers.

3.1 IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Needs-Based Placement: Shelters should be strategically located to best serve the needs of the homeless population while minimizing negative impacts on surrounding communities.

Comprehensive Support Services: Adequate support services, such as mental health care, addiction treatment, and job training, are crucial to address the root causes of homelessness and reduce the potential for negative impacts.

Community Engagement: Open and transparent communication between service providers, residents, and local government is essential to address concerns and build community support for effective solutions

It's crucial to address these concerns through careful planning, community engagement, and the provision of comprehensive support services to both the homeless population and the surrounding community.

3.2 CONCLUSION:

If this site is to be considered, can we please have more information and further clarification on the site selection process, specifically, a site justification (if decision is passed).

Needs Assessment: Please provide details on the specific standards, guidelines, or benchmarks used to evaluate each potential site for the HAT project.

Guidelines/Standards: Request for the standards and guidelines utilized by City staff in developing this HAT project proposal.

Zoning and Development Controls: Information on permitted land uses, building heights, setbacks, and other relevant development controls as per the applicable Zoning By-law and any relevant amendments.

Site Plan Control Requirements: If applicable, an outline of specific design and development considerations for the site.

Environmental Site Assessments: If applicable, reports providing information on the environmental conditions of the site.

Relevant Plans: Any applicable urban design guidelines, transportation plans, or other relevant documents that may impact the site's development.

Funding: What is the total amount of funding for this site? Is this the most cost-effective way to house the homeless? What is the total number of homeless individuals in Hamilton? Determining the exact number of homeless individuals in Hamilton is challenging due to the lack of a comprehensive and consistent system for accurately counting this population. Based on my experience with similar projects, the actual expenditure for establishing and maintaining any form of shelter for the homeless population consistently surpasses the initial budgetary projections.

3.2.1 COMMUNITY CONCERN

Resident Safety and Security: Prioritization of resident safety and security measures for those living near the shelter location.

Substance Abuse Policy: Are there established policies or protocols related to substance abuse within the site?

Noise and Disturbance: Mitigation strategies for potential noise levels, loitering, and disruptive behavior that could impact the quality of life for nearby residents.

Community Impact: Concerns that the shelter may attract other individuals experiencing homelessness or those with mental health or addiction issues, potentially impacting the desirability of the neighborhood.

Strain on local resources: Concerns about increased demands on local services such as police, fire, and sanitation.

Lack of Community Consultation and Engagement: Concerns that residents may feel their concerns were not adequately considered during the planning and decision-making process.

Site Suitability: Existing social and economic conditions of the neighborhood.
Zoning and Land Use Regulations: Compliance of the proposed location with existing zoning regulations and land use bylaws.

Building Codes, Fire and Safety Regulations: Compliance with codes governing fire suppression systems, exits, and occupancy limits.

Sanitation and Health: Compliance with regulations related to plumbing, ventilation, and waste disposal.

Community Engagement and Consultation & Transparency: Please outline plans for informing and engaging the surrounding community about the proposed HAT site, including:

- Public meetings and information sessions.
- Distribution of informational materials.
- Establishment of a communication channel (e.g., email list, website) for ongoing updates and addressing concerns.

3.2.2 HOMELESSNESS AND SITE SUITABILITY IN THIS LOCATION

I believe this proposal is fundamentally flawed as it fails to prioritize the needs and perspectives of individuals experiencing homelessness. Further assessment is required:

1. Needs Assessment:

- **What are the local resources available to support individuals experiencing homelessness?** (e.g., soup kitchens/food banks, shelters, outreach programs, mental health clinics)

2. Site Suitability:

- **What are the zoning regulations and land use restrictions applicable to this location?**
- **What are the environmental concerns associated with this site?** (e.g., proximity to hazardous materials, noise pollution, potential for flooding)
- **What are the transportation options available to and from this location?** (e.g., public transportation, walking distance to essential services)
- **What are the potential impacts on the surrounding community?** (e.g., concerns about safety, property values, increased traffic)
- **What are the community perceptions and concerns regarding this site?** (e.g., have community engagement efforts been conducted to gather feedback?)

3. Project Feasibility:

- **What are the estimated costs associated with developing and operating a homeless shelter or supportive housing at this location?**
- **What are the potential funding sources available to support this project?** (e.g., government grants, private donations, philanthropic organizations)
- **What are the staffing and operational requirements for this project?** (e.g., number of staff needed, required expertise, necessary equipment)
- **What is the proposed timeline for project development and implementation?**

4. Long-Term Sustainability:

- **How will the long-term sustainability of this project be ensured?** (e.g., ongoing funding mechanisms, effective service delivery models, community partnerships)
- **What are the plans for ongoing evaluation and monitoring of project outcomes?**
- **How will the project address the evolving needs of the homeless population in this location?**

3.2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL/ECOLOGICAL

It's crucial to consider these potential impacts and prioritize the protection of the Red Hill Valley Trail.

Thorough Environmental Assessment: A comprehensive environmental impact assessment is essential to fully understand the potential consequences of the development.

Alternative Locations: Explore alternative locations for the tiny home development that minimize environmental impact.

Mitigation Measures: If the development proceeds, implement strong mitigation measures to minimize the impact on wildlife and the environment. This could include creating wildlife corridors, implementing noise reduction measures, utilizing sustainable building practices and materials, and careful management of stormwater.

We understand that some documents may be subject to access and privacy laws. We will comply with all applicable regulations in accessing and using the information.

Note: These are just a few key questions to consider.