

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS) community at 2300 Brampton Street. As a long-term resident and invested member of this community, I am deeply concerned about the potential negative impacts this development would have on our neighborhood.

It is concerning and disturbing that this proposal has been introduced without prior consultation or meaningful input from the neighborhood. As residents directly impacted by this decision, we deserve a voice in decisions that affect our homes, safety, and quality of life.

There has been no public discussion regarding how this shelter could impact local families, particularly those with young children. The influx of new families in the area raises concerns about potential disturbances and safety issues.

Increased Safety Concerns and Crime

There is a significant risk of heightened crime rates, including property damage, theft, and even violence. Shelters and similar facilities have historically been linked to increased criminal activity in surrounding areas, and this site may face the same challenges, undermining the safety of both residents and the broader community.

As a female resident who frequently walks my dog in the area, I value the safety and sense of security our community provides. Unfortunately, I fear that the proposed shelter will compromise both.

We've already encountered troubling issues with vandalism in the neighborhood, such as the burning of the Red Hill Trail path. Additionally, a broken-down truck housed a couple in front of the Globe Leash Free Dog Park for a week or so this summer, when a car parked beside this broken-down truck had its windows smashed, harassing notes were left, and a shopping cart was placed on top. If the presence of just a couple of homeless individuals led to such problems, I fear that a 25-unit shelter will only exacerbate the situation and create a completely unsafe neighborhood.

Increased property crime near shelters is well-documented. A study by the Department of Criminology in Vancouver showed a 56% rise in property crime within 100 meters of emergency winter shelters, particularly thefts from vehicles and vandalism. Data from 2022 also revealed that homeless individuals were 514 times more likely to be arrested and charged with a felony compared to the general population.

Placing a large number of vulnerable individuals in an isolated area may increase public safety risks for both the residents and the surrounding community. While I appreciate the support from law enforcement and volunteers, such projects can be associated with increased crime, including theft and vandalism, especially when they are not integrated into the broader community.

Environmental and Neighborhood Disruptions

The construction and operation of the tiny shelters may have environmental consequences, including waste generation, resource consumption, and negative interactions with the surrounding environment, which could strain city resources in a sensitive area. Additionally, the presence of a shelter could result in increased loitering, littering, drug use, and the disposal of paraphernalia in the surrounding area. These disruptions would directly affect the quality of life for local residents, especially in a neighborhood that has recently seen an influx of new families with school-aged children and many dogs and owners who enjoy walking in the area.

The Globe Leash Free Dog Park, a vital space frequently used by residents, and the Red Hill Trail, an isolated path leading to the lake, would both be negatively impacted. The shelter's proximity to these spaces would make them unsafe and unusable, depriving the community of important areas for recreation and connection.

Impact on Local Resources and Law Enforcement

The need for increased police presence could place a strain on local law enforcement, leading to more frequent service calls and additional pressure on the court system. Moreover, the site would likely increase the demand for social services such as mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and emergency medical responses, which are already under-resourced.

Property Value Concerns

Residents in the area are understandably concerned about the potential negative impact on property values. The proximity of this site could make the neighborhood less desirable for potential buyers, ultimately decreasing property values and discouraging investment in the community. Studies show that homeless shelters can reduce property values by approximately 12.7%.

Isolation from Essential Services

The proposed site is significantly removed from essential services such as healthcare services, food banks, and employment opportunities. For those experiencing homelessness, access to these services is crucial for recovery and long-term stability. The lack of nearby services will hinder the success of this initiative and place undue strain on our community. Studies have shown that social isolation and lack of access to essential services are significant barriers to overcoming homelessness.

Isolating this community from vital resources will only make it more difficult for individuals to transition out of homelessness. This could undermine the effectiveness of the initiative, which should focus not just on providing temporary housing but on creating pathways to permanent solutions.

Increased Foot Traffic, Noise, and Disturbances

The shelter could increase foot traffic, disrupting the peace and quiet of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the operations of the shelter could create noise and disturbances that affect the day-to-day life of surrounding residents. Local businesses may also experience negative perceptions from customers due to the proximity of the site, potentially damaging the reputation of businesses in the area.

In conclusion, adding another 15 to 25 cabins to an already vulnerable area could strain local resources, including emergency services, and negatively impact the overall quality of life for nearby residents. We need a balanced and sustainable solution that doesn't place undue strain on other parts of the city.

Given these concerns, I urge the city to reconsider this location for the proposed HATS community. While homelessness is a critical issue that requires attention, it is essential that solutions do not inadvertently create further challenges for both individuals experiencing homelessness and the broader community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I trust you will reconsider this decision and how it will negatively impact the neighborhood.

Sincerely,
Cassandra Galardo
Quebec Street Resident