

Housing Solutions:

A place for everyone

YORK REGION 10-YEAR HOUSING PLAN



JUNE 2014



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City of Markham



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A Message from York Regional Council

Housing is a fundamental need. It connects residents in The Regional Municipality of York to our economy, transportation systems, environment, and health and social services.

A full range of housing options provides people at every stage of life and income bracket with the opportunity to stay in their community and increase their quality of life by living near family and work.

Building complete communities where we can live, work, shop and play begins with housing that meets the needs of all residents.

Housing is a long-standing priority for York Regional Council. *Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone* builds on the success of the 2002 Housing Supply Strategy and reinforces our commitment to providing appropriate housing for all.

This plan identifies the actions York Region will take over the next 10 years to address the growing and diversifying housing needs of our residents and workers.

The ultimate success of creating housing diversity depends on the collective engagement and sustained investments from all stakeholders. Together, we can turn the curve.



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
What is the Solution?	5
The Housing Situation	7
Everyone has a role to play	10
Action Plan	12
Goal 1	12
Goal 2	16
Goal 3	18
Goal 4	20
Appendix	24



The Executive Summary

The **Reality** of the **Rental** and **Ownership** Market in **York Region**

From 2011 to 2031, we estimate that an additional

13,700 seniors and youth will be renters. If the private market maintains the same pace as in 2012, we'll have about **600** new units

York Regi

NO VACANCY

Rental market

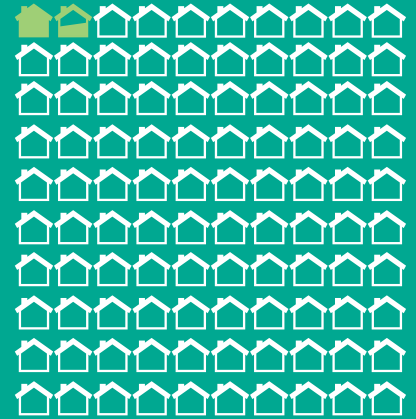
Only **16** of all housing starts in 2013 were purpose built **rental units**¹



Rental housing construction accounts for only **1%** of all housing starts from 2003 to 2013.²

2013 Private Sector **Vacancy Rate** - well below a healthy rate of **3%**³

1.6%



in 2011

17,705



York Region households (5.5%) were home to multiple families, growing by **65%** from 2001, outpacing the growth of all other household types⁷

Over the last decade, the wait list has nearly doubled, leaving more than

10,000

households waiting for **Social Housing**

What happens to our businesses if

workers move away

because they

can't afford to live here



Ownership market

2013



Average home prices in **York Region**

Re-sale condominium **\$333,373**⁴

Re-sale townhome **\$469,312**⁴

Re-sale single detached **\$737,374**⁴

New single detached **\$799,965**¹

Who ~~can't~~ afford to buy a home here



Nurse



Police Officer



Teacher



Cook

2003 → 2013



Average house price went up by

85%⁵

however



Median hourly wage only rose by

21%⁶

What is the **solution**?

Building complete communities, where people can live, work, shop and play begins with a full mix and range of housing options that meet the various needs of our residents and workers.

We need more rental housing; we need to take steps to preserve the limited supply of existing rental housing and we need to address home ownership affordability. We also need to strengthen the system of services that support people who have difficulty finding and keeping housing appropriate to their needs.

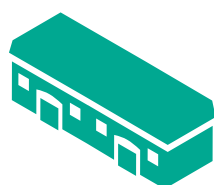
***Our 10-Year Housing Plan is a big piece of the solution.
Here are our goals.***



GOAL 1
**Increase the
rental housing
supply**

Expected outcomes:

- Increased supply of private sector rental units
- Increased supply of safe, legal second suites
- Increased supply of government funded units and rent subsidies



GOAL 2
**Sustain the
existing rental
housing supply**

Expected outcomes:

- Preserve the existing supply of private sector rental housing
- Strengthen the social housing system



GOAL 3
**Support home
ownership
affordability**

Expected outcomes:

- Increased new affordable home ownership options
- Supports provided for low and moderate income homeowners

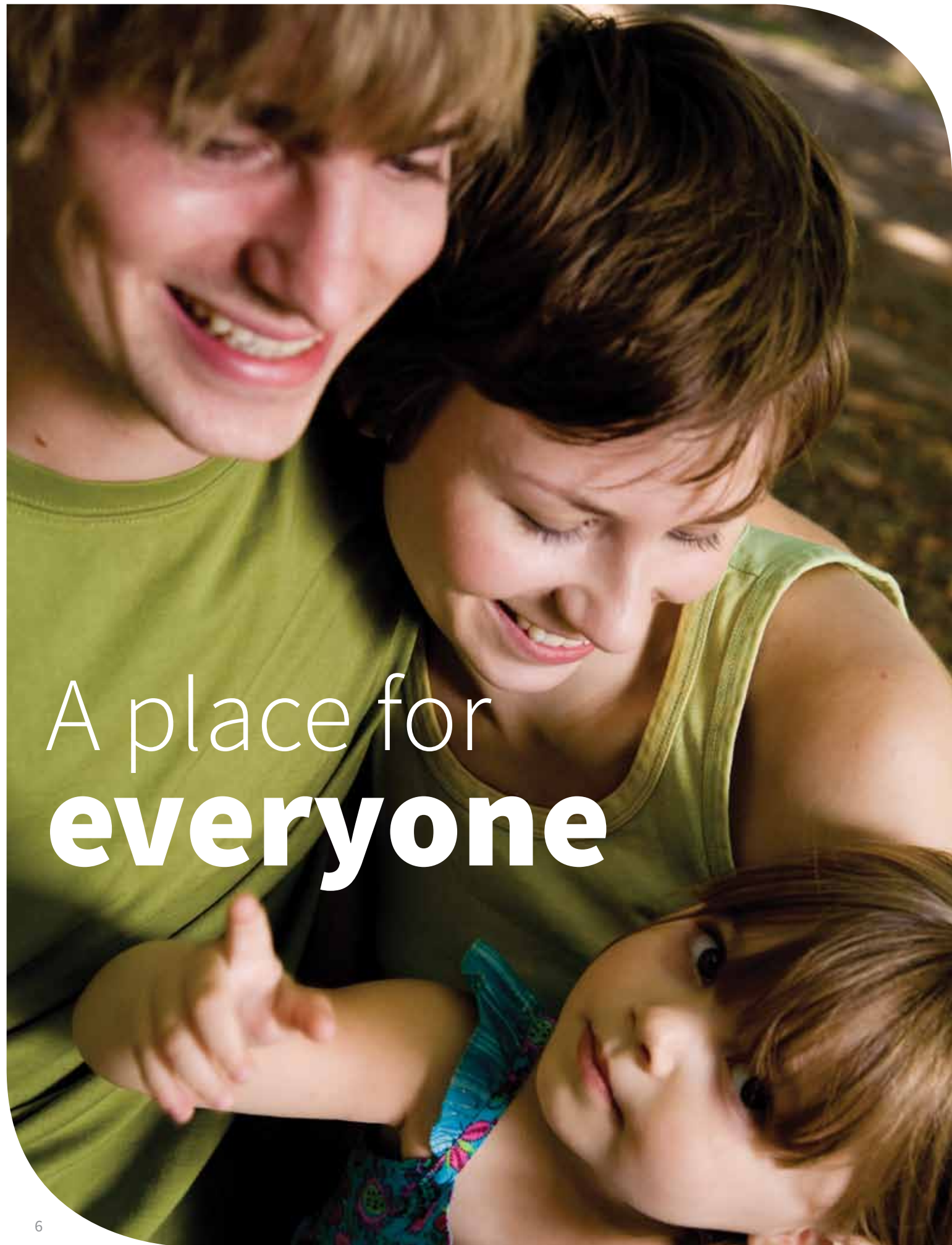


GOAL 4
**Strengthen the
homelessness
and housing
stability system**

Expected outcomes:

- An integrated service delivery system developed
- Low and moderate income and at-risk households will find and keep appropriate housing

***It takes a village to turn the curve.** Federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments, housing providers, community agencies, housing development industry - together, will be the solution.*



A place for
everyone

The **Housing** Situation

At one time, the conversation about making ends meet in York Region concerned itself with only low-income earners. Today, that concern has grown and moderate-income earners have been added to those who may struggle financially.

Why is this?

York Region has a lot going for it: a rapidly growing and diverse population; business and industry; employment opportunities; farmland, beaches and forests; educational facilities and plenty of services for its residents. York Region also has a high-cost home ownership market, the lowest proportion of rental housing in the GTA and—perhaps not surprisingly—a very low vacancy rate.

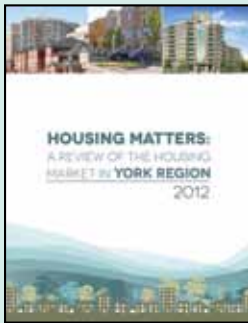
The average cost of a new single-detached home in York Region reached almost \$800,000 in 2013. At this rate, the cost of housing has become a serious issue for the moderate-income earners and pushed ownership out of reach for lower income populations.

We have a very limited supply of rental housing with essentially no new, private-rental housing built in the last decade. Our vacancy rate hovers around one per cent, compared to the three per cent that experts say indicates a healthy rental market.

Because of the lack of rental options, individuals and families may be forced into home ownership that is beyond their budgets or to move outside of the Region. Those who opt to stay near their places of work and pay more than the affordable rate of 30 per cent of income on housing, place themselves in vulnerable financial situations, often cutting back on other essentials like food and heating.

Developing the 10-Year Plan: Our Process

- We researched housing needs



- We looked at what we are already doing to support housing needs
- We listened to our stakeholders
- We engaged local municipalities
- We consulted housing and homelessness system partners
- We shared our draft 10-Year Plan



We know that many workers select to live outside the Region. At 55.4%, York Region has one of the lowest live-work ratios in the GTA. This has wide-ranging implications.

- Traffic congestion, pollution and the impact commuting has on the quality-of-life of our residents
- Potential impact on business with the risk of staff turnover when employees find work closer to their homes outside the Region

As our economy, population, and urban structure grow and diversify, our housing options must do the same.

The ongoing impact of lack of housing options

This need for more housing options has grown into a mainstream issue that impacts everyone in the Region in obvious and not so obvious ways. Our young adults need a place to call home. Our seniors and recently retired colleagues may want to downsize or retire without moving to a distant community. Our young professionals and newcomers who come to the Region for employment may want to live close to work.

Without creating more housing options our Region will have:

- **Heightened demand for social housing units** – we have more than 10,000 households on the social housing waiting list and demand continues to rise
- **Challenges for businesses** in York Region as they struggle to attract or retain employees who are unable to find local housing options
- **Increased traffic congestion** as people are forced to travel longer distances from home to work
- **Lower quality of life** as longer commutes negatively impact our environment and health by increasing emissions, stress, and time away from home
- **Seniors and young adults leaving our communities to find housing that meets their needs**

It takes a village

York Regional Council has led the way in setting the foundation for the work ahead by:

- approving *Vision 2051*, with a long term goal of Appropriate Housing for All Ages and Stages
- adopting bold and progressive Official Plan policies
- partnering with community organizations to deliver innovative programs for low income residents through the Community Investment Strategy
- moving forward with the Region's first emergency and transitional housing for homeless women and a youth hub that will serve homeless and at risk youth in the southern part of the Region
- prioritizing investment in new affordable housing projects

Council has paved the way but no one organization can solve complex housing challenges alone. All levels of government, the housing development industry, community agencies and housing providers must work together to develop strategic, holistic and collaborative solutions. By working together, the potential for change is real and the possibilities for innovative solutions are endless.

Regional Council approved the *Housing Supply Strategy* in 2002. From 2002 to 2012, Regional Council's accomplishments include:

- ✓ Working with Housing York and community non-profit housing providers to create 734 new affordable rent units with a total investment of over \$153 million
- ✓ Providing more than \$29 million in domiciliary hostel funding for people who need housing with supports
- ✓ Investing more than \$52 million in programs and services that support low and moderate income residents
- ✓ Directing more than \$32 million to social housing providers for building repairs and accessibility upgrades
- ✓ Establishing a policy framework that supports housing affordability, such as:
 - the *Regional Official Plan 2010*, with affordable housing targets and policies
 - multi-residential tax rates reduced to match home owner rates
 - a by-law that provides conditional grants to off-set development charges for non-profit housing

Everyone has a role to play

The roles of federal and provincial governments

Building a housing system that meets the needs of our growing and diversifying population requires support from the federal and provincial governments. Their roles are to:

- create policies that support housing needs
- make investments that are sustained over time
- set out national and provincial housing strategies

The roles of the Region

The Regional Municipality of York has many roles in encouraging affordable housing development, spanning the functions of all departments. The Region:

- works with the nine local municipalities to manage growth in accordance with the policy framework of the *Regional Official Plan*
- owns and operates affordable housing units across the Region
- partners with non-profit and cooperative housing providers
- funds and administers a range of community-based programs and services for low- and moderate-income households including:
 - o supports for individuals and families who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless
 - o emergency shelters, transitional housing and domiciliary hostels

The roles of municipalities

York Region's nine local municipalities:

- set land-use designations and growth patterns for their municipality and within individual communities
- implement the Region's minimum targets for affordable housing development
- pass zoning by-laws that permit secondary suites and accessory units
- support affordable housing development in a variety of ways, such as including social housing as a community benefit in negotiations with developers

The roles of the housing development industry

Members of the housing development industry, who are most familiar with the challenges and opportunities of building housing:

- inform local and regional land use planning
- build new housing units

The roles of the Human Services Planning Board (HSPB)

HSPB is a multi-sector group made up of 24 community leaders in York Region working to enhance human service through collaborative advocacy and initiatives that build community capacity. The board:

- implements individual and collective actions that address economic vulnerability
- advocates for housing affordability and economic self-sufficiency on behalf of low- and moderate-income residents' needs
- provides advice to York Region Council

The roles of community partners

Community-based organizations have many roles in supporting affordability

- Non-profit agencies deliver a broad range of vital programs and services to York Region's low and moderate income residents. Many of these programs help people to stay housed
- United Way provides leadership and fosters partnerships in human services, leads implementation of the federally funded Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- Non-profit and cooperative housing providers own and operate affordable rental housing for low and moderate households and people with disabilities

The next 10 years

This Housing Plan builds on the work the Region has already done and proposes a total of 49 actions to increase the rental housing supply, sustain the existing rental housing supply, support affordable home ownership and strengthen the homelessness and housing stability system.

The Region's action plan includes:

- Continuing to build new affordable rental housing and provide more rent subsidies
- Taking steps to preserve the supply of existing private sector housing and strengthen the social housing system
- Working with partners to find innovative approaches to addressing home ownership affordability
- Supporting people who have difficulty finding and keeping housing appropriate to their needs

Over the next 10 years, York Region will improve housing affordability to build healthy and complete communities where residents can afford to live, work, shop and play.



GOAL 1

Increase the rental housing supply

When we increase the number of rental units, we have:

- More private sector rental homes available
- More safe and legal second suites available
- More social housing and rent subsidies available

With the high cost of home ownership and the lowest proportion of rentals in the GTA, York Region must make changes to encourage more rental units to be built.

Phase 1 First five years	Phase 2 Years five to 10	On-going Throughout the 10 year Plan
Increase the supply of private sector rental homes		
Partner with local municipalities to:		
Explore incentive, strategy and best practice options that local municipalities can use to encourage development of new rental housing	Investigate the use of community improvement plans in Regional centres and key development areas in Regional corridors to increase the rental housing supply	
Establish an internal working team and process to facilitate implementation through the planning and development process and to respond to specific development proposals		
Partner with the Human Services Planning Board to:		
Develop the Make Rental Happen Challenge, which asks post-secondary students to create innovative private-market rental housing solutions that are replicable and applicable to the York Region context		
Collaborate with stakeholders to advocate for more private-market rental housing and develop a communication strategy that raises awareness of the economic realities of and need for rental housing		
Create a dialogue with key stakeholders (e.g. local municipalities and building industry) to determine how to create the environment for the development of more private-market rental housing. This will include an exploration of tools and models that support the development of private-market rental housing		

Phase 1

First five years

Phase 2

Years five to 10

On-going

Throughout the 10 year Plan

Increase the supply of safe and legal second suites

Ensure that local municipalities adopt official plan policies and zoning bylaw provisions that authorize secondary suites

Work with the local municipalities through the secondary plan process to encourage developers to design and market new homes that accommodate second suites in new community areas in Markham, Vaughan, and East Gwillimbury

Assist and coordinate with the local municipalities in tracking second suites and monitor the number of second suites constructed and licensed

Increase the supply of social housing and rent subsidies

Consider opportunities to partner with Metrolinx and the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation to incorporate new rental housing development in the planning for subway stations/major transit facilities

Develop guidelines for accepting social housing units through the use of Section 37 provisions of the *Planning Act*

Including new social housing units as part of the long-term growth planning for Regionally owned infrastructure

Develop a strategy to intensify/optimize Regionally owned housing sites

Leverage the current Federal-Provincial Investment in Affordable Housing Program to develop 457 new affordable units

Investigate future opportunities to develop additional affordable rental housing as Federal-Provincial funds become available

Continue to increase the number of subsidized rental units

What we are already doing

Encouraging the development of new rental housing

- York Region is the first service manager in Ontario to reduce the multi-residential tax rate to match the homeowner's rate
- York Region has invested \$3.8 million (up to 2013) to offset development charges for affordable housing under the *Municipal Capital Facilities Bylaw*
- The Affordable Housing Incentive Program dedicates the Region's water and wastewater servicing allocation reserve to multi-unit government funded rentals, benefitting 540 units to 2013

Creating new opportunities through partnerships

- From 2004 to 2013, developed 734 new affordable rental units with leveraged federal and provincial investments
- Supporting the Human Services Planning Board in its work with key stakeholders (including building and financial industry champions and local municipal administrators, finance departments, and planning departments) to create the changes necessary to increase the supply of private market rental housing in York Region



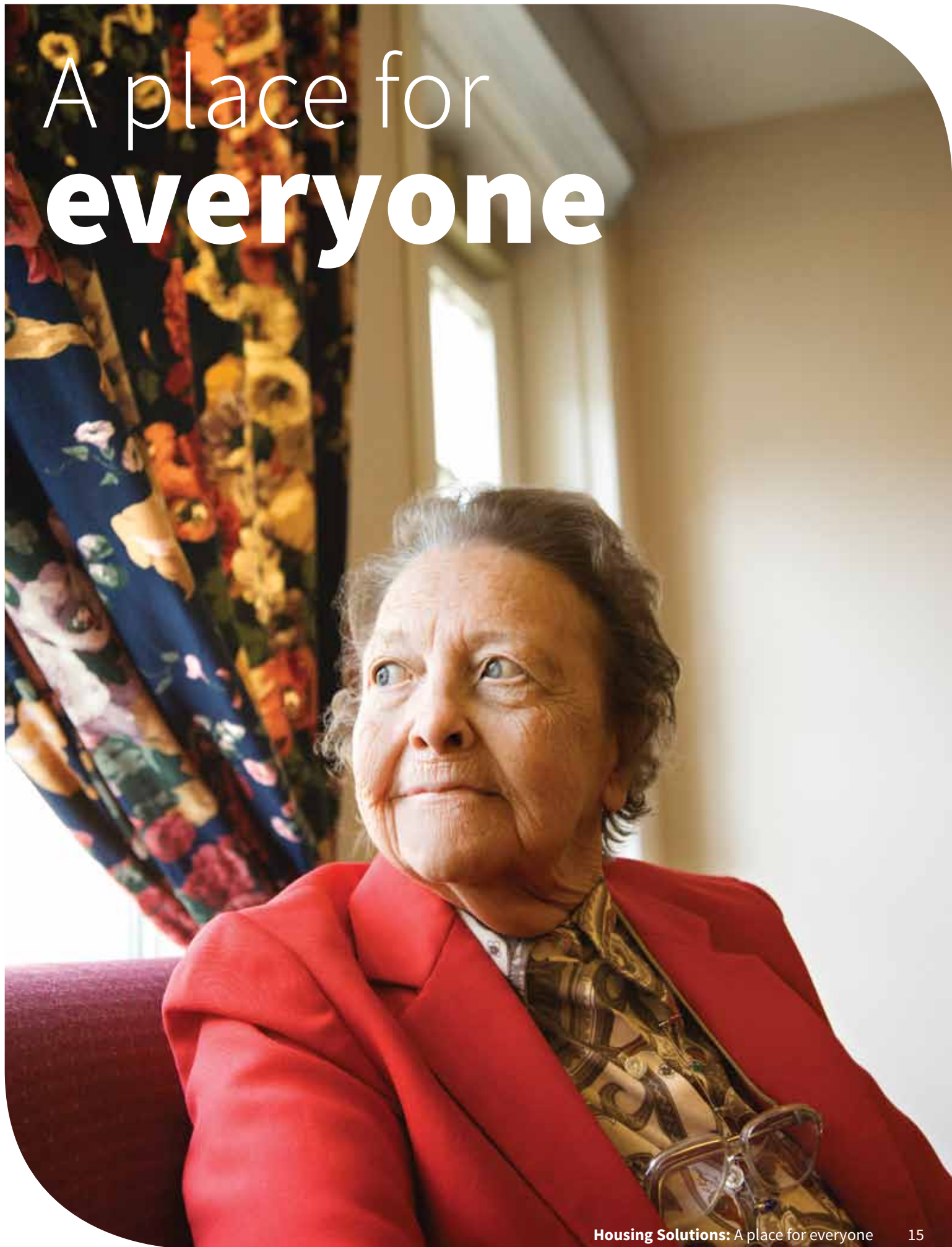
York Regional Council created the Human Services Planning Board of York Region (HSPB-YR) to bring together leaders in human services to find new ways of improving the well-being of our residents. In 2013, the HSPB-YR led a social media campaign (#MakeRentalHappen) to raise awareness about the lack of private market rental housing options.

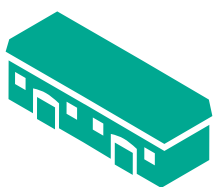
Following the success of that campaign, the HSPB led the Make Rental Happen Challenge in Spring 2014, a global ideas competition for post-secondary students to submit ideas for private market rental housing options.

More information is available at www.york.ca/MakeRentalHappen



A place for **everyone**





GOAL 2

Sustain the existing rental housing supply

When we sustain the existing rental housing supply, we:

- Maintain the supply of private sector rental housing available
- Strengthen the social housing system

Maintaining the current stock of housing rental units ensures that we keep existing units in good and safe repair, and ensures that new rental units add to the housing supply rather than replace decaying units.

Phase 1 First five years	Phase 2 Years five to 10	On-going Throughout the 10 year Plan
<i>Preserve the existing supply of private sector rental housing</i>		
Partner with local municipalities to implement <i>Regional Official Plan</i> policies that protect the existing supply of rental housing from demolition (including demolition by neglect) or conversion to condominium		
<i>Strengthen the social housing system</i>		
		Advocate for sustained federal and provincial investments in social housing repair and renewal and for the inclusion of housing in federal and provincial infrastructure funding programs
		Sustain the social housing supply as former federal and provincial funding and financing arrangements come to an end
		Collaborate with the Province and the Housing Services Corporation to find ways to use the equity from social housing buildings to fund major repairs

Phase 1

First five years

Phase 2

Years five to 10

On-going

Throughout the 10 year Plan

Strengthen the social housing system

Plan for the sustainability of the social housing portfolio by:

Developing a long term, asset-management and financial strategy for the social housing portfolio

Providing supports to the volunteer boards of directors of non-profit and co-operative housing providers to strengthen their capacity to effectively manage their housing communities

Enhance supports for social housing applicants, tenants and co-operative members by:

Developing a community health framework to better connect social housing residents with services

Reviewing social housing waiting list policies and practices to better connect people to supports while they wait for housing

Enhance community partnerships

Work with funders to support the changing needs of Housing York tenants

What we are already doing

Preserving existing rental housing through polices and investment strategies

- The *Regional Official Plan, 2010* requires local municipalities to adopt policies that protect rental housing from demolition and conversion to condominium or non-residential use
- Supporting social housing providers in maintaining their buildings with additional subsidy and secured loan programs, technical services and shared purchasing initiatives

The Region invests \$500,000 annually in the Social Housing Innovation Fund. The fund provides grants to enable housing providers to retrofit their buildings to improve accessibility and energy efficiency. Housing providers can also apply to the fund for grants to help pay for new playgrounds that meet current safety standards.



GOAL 3

Support home ownership affordability

When we support affordable home ownership, we:

- Increase new affordable home ownership options
- Provide supports for low and moderate income homeowners

Buying a home is unaffordable for many York Region residents. Making home ownership more affordable gives residents more housing options and lessens the need for our workforce to live outside of the Region.

Phase 1 First five years	Phase 2 Years five to 10	On-going Throughout the 10 year Plan
<i>Increase new affordable home ownership options</i>		
Update the Housing and Our Economy report		
Identify incentive options for developments that incorporate affordable housing units within centres and corridors		
Work with local municipalities and the development industry to establish implementation guidelines for the <i>Regional Official Plan</i> policies that require 25 per cent of new housing units across the Region to be affordable and 35 per cent of new housing units in Regional centres and key development areas be targeted as affordable	Work with local partners and the private sector to consider innovative building techniques and financial arrangements to support development of affordable housing. Programs to be explored may include: height and density incentives; community improvement plans; grants in lieu of development charges; and reduced permit fees	

Phase 1

First five years

Phase 2

Years five to 10

On-going

Throughout the 10 year Plan

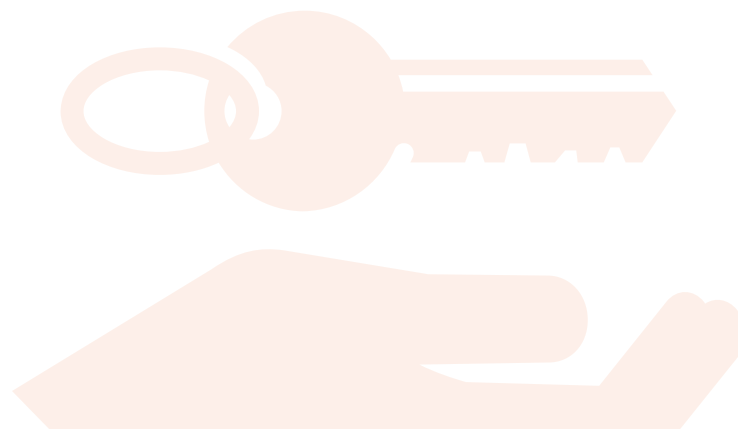
Provide supports for low- and moderate-income homeowners

In 2012, the federal Homeowner Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program and the home repair funding component of the Ontario Disability Support Program ended. The discontinuation of these programs leaves low-income residents without resources to make necessary home repairs or accessibility modifications. The end of these programs also discourages aging at home, despite a shift in health care for older adults from acute to home care that often requires home modifications. To address this gap, the Region will:

Deliver and evaluate a Home Repair and Renovation Pilot Program providing grants to low-income households who need assistance with accessibility modifications or critical repairs

What we are already doing

In the publication, *In the Zone*, the Ontario Human Rights Commission recognized the Region's leadership in approving a *Regional Official Plan (2010)* that outlines specific policies for promoting an appropriate mix and range of affordable housing.





GOAL 4

Strengthen the homelessness and housing stability system

When we strengthen the homelessness and housing-stability system, we:

- Develop an integrated service delivery system
- Help low- and moderate-income and at-risk-households find and keep appropriate housing

Homelessness is largely an invisible problem in York Region, yet it exists across all age groups. Providing supports that let people have housing security and reduce homelessness are key tenets of a community that is a place where everyone can live, work, play and learn.

Phase 1 First five years	Phase 2 Years five to 10	On-going Throughout the 10 year Plan
<i>Develop an integrated service delivery system</i>		
Implement a new service delivery model with wrap-around services in emergency and transitional housing and incorporate the requirement into service agreements	Implement a service model that enables people to access all of the homelessness services with one point of entry	Work with community partners to strengthen and better connect homelessness and housing stability programs and services
Support community partners in advocating for investment in mental health and addictions supports in York Region	Identify and address specific service gaps such as prevention of youth homelessness	
Open Belinda's Place, the Region's first shelter and transitional home for homeless women (28 emergency beds and nine transitional units). Belinda's Place will provide services to help clients to obtain and maintain housing	Develop a community engagement strategy to involve diverse sectors in supporting homelessness solutions	
Develop a Richmond Hill Youth Hub with a drop-in centre (14 emergency beds, 11 transitional units) with support services for youth		
Share homelessness data with community partners to jointly work on new service priorities		
Supplement the Community Paramedicine program for emergency shelter residents with additional health-support partnerships (e.g. nurse practitioner, family physician)		

Phase 1

First five years

Phase 2

Years five to 10

On-going

Throughout the 10 year Plan

*Low- and moderate-income and at-risk-households
will find and keep appropriate housing*

Link employment supports to move homeless clients and clients at risk of homelessness toward independence (e.g. *social enterprise, sector-specific skills development, Internationally Educated Professionals program*)

Work with local partners towards zoning provisions that are inclusive of transitional and supportive housing

Continue to implement the Community Investment Strategy to fund community agencies for prevention focused projects as well as programs that support low and moderate income residents

Pilot a rental benefit program to help eligible residents secure and/or maintain affordable housing by providing transitional rent assistance with wrap-around case management supports

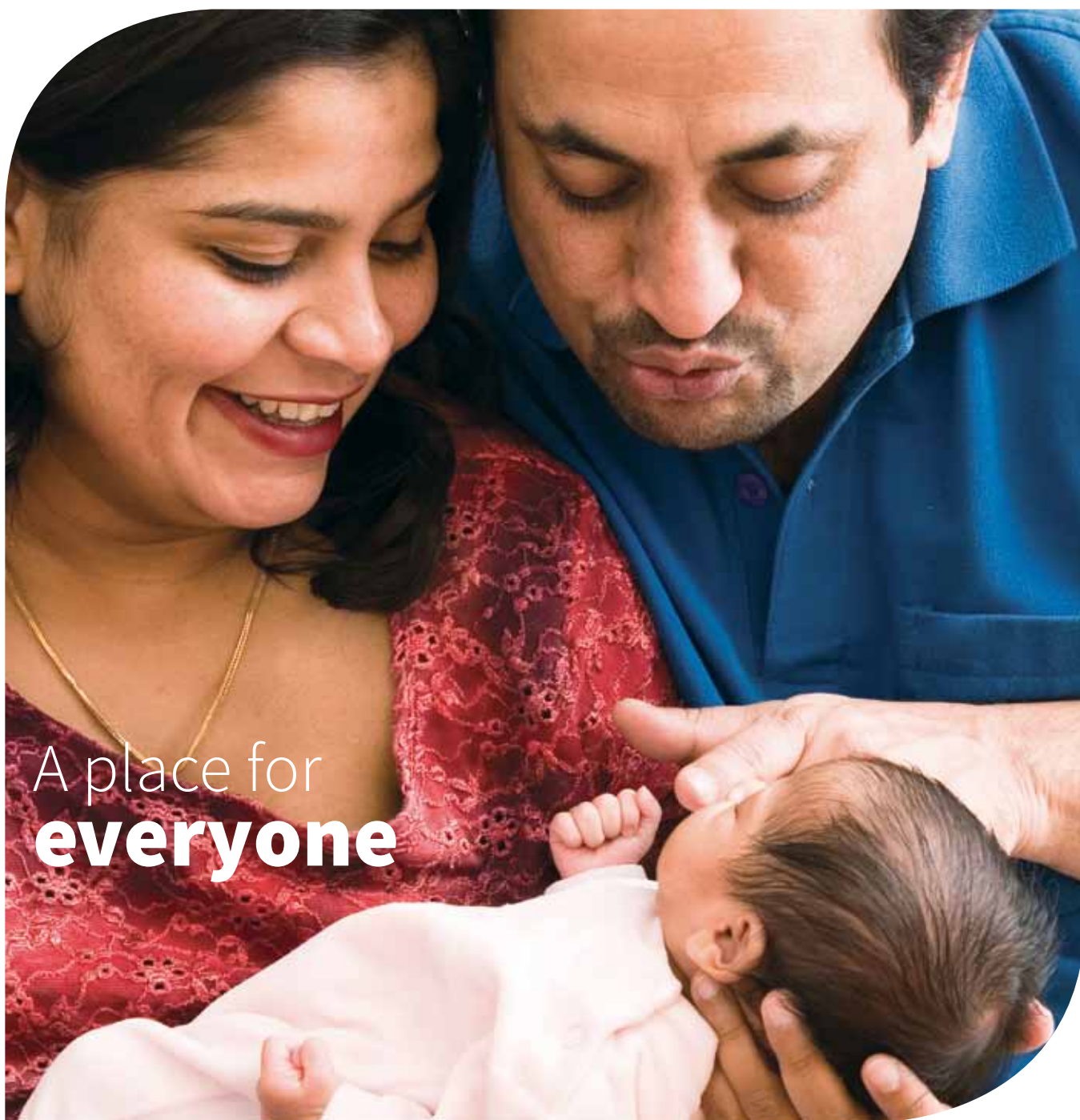
Investigate models and options to implement or partner to support appropriate service hubs

Evaluate the pilot program and implement an on-going Housing Stability Program for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients to wrap-around homelessness supports and prevention services

Implement a client-centric case management model for individuals and families with complex needs that focusses on preventing homelessness and increasing housing stability

Evaluate the possibility of increasing the Region's capacity to deliver service by using new integrated social workers to support residents with multiple barriers to maintain housing

Work with community partners to increase knowledge and awareness regarding rights and responsibilities to promote safe and successful tenancies



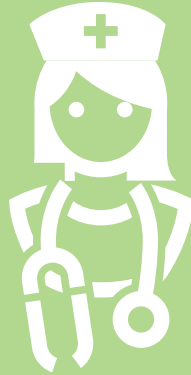
A place for
everyone

Measuring our progress

As our economy, population, and urban structure grow and diversify, our housing options must do the same. The four goals identified in this plan set the course for our Region to continue to be a great place to live for our residents and our workforce. This housing plan describes our housing responsibilities and outlines actions the Region will take.

As part of the on-going commitment to housing, the Region publishes regular reports on the housing market and related economic and population information. The Region will enhance the current reporting framework with updates on the progress made towards achieving the goals in the housing plan.

Who ~~can~~ afford to buy a home here



Nurse



Police Officer



Teacher

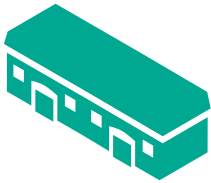


Cook

**Software Engineers and
Designers, Primary Care
Paramedics, Social Workers,
Librarians, Electrical Power
Line and Cable Workers, Truck
Drivers, and Banking, Insurance
and other Financial Clerks...**

Appendix:

What the Region is already doing to address housing need



Principles for Regional Affordable Housing Investments:

- - Integration within the community
- - Permanent affordability
- - Build with a modest housing form
- - Supportive of intensification of Regional Centres and Corridors
- - Located near transit, services and employment
- - Addressing the social housing waiting list

1. Increase the rental housing supply

The Region has a policy framework that encourages the development of new rental housing.

- ➔ York Region is the first service manager in Ontario to reduce the multi-residential tax rate to match the homeowner's rate
- ➔ The *Regional Official Plan, 2010*:
 - ✓ Encourages the construction of new rental units with a full mix and range of unit sizes, including family-sized and smaller units
 - ✓ Requires local municipalities to adopt official plan policies and zoning by-law provisions that authorize secondary suites
 - ✓ Permits use of surplus government lands to lower land costs
 - ✓ Encourages local municipalities to adopt policies for an equitable distribution of social housing types
 - ✓ Supports local municipalities in using height and density bonusing (Section 37 of the Planning Act) to negotiate for new social housing units

The Region has investment strategies that incent affordable rental housing development.

- ➔ The Region's Municipal Capital Facilities By-law provides for conditional grants to off-set development charges for affordable housing, a total investment of \$3.8 million to 2013
- ➔ The Region's Development Charge By-law includes a charge to support new social housing construction
- ➔ The Affordable Housing Incentive Program dedicates the Region's water and wastewater servicing allocation reserve to multi-unit government funded rentals, benefitting 303 units to 2012

The Region leverages Provincial and Federal funding to increase the supply of social housing.

- ➔ From 2004 to early 2013, the Region enabled Housing York and six community based non-profit housing providers to create a total of 734 new affordable rental units that:
 - ✓ Leveraged federal/provincial Affordable Housing Program Funding to support a total investment of more than \$153 million
 - ✓ Increased the supply of barrier free rental units and housing with support services for people with disabilities
 - ✓ Provided 219 households with a rent subsidy through a made-in-York rent assistance program that makes rents affordable for low income tenants
- ➔ Housing York's new affordable rental housing:
 - ✓ Increases the supply of rental units modified for people with disabilities and incorporates accessible design features that make buildings easier for people with disabilities to visit
 - ✓ Incorporates energy efficient design, materials, procedures and equipment

Partnering with the Human Services Planning Board, the Region creates new opportunities.

- ➔ In 2010, Regional Council appointed the Human Services Planning Board as a multi-sector collaboration of key human service organizations, agencies, networks and community leaders, working together to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of human services within York Region through initiatives that build capacity within the larger human services sector and through collaborative advocacy.
- ➔ The Human Services Planning Board is facilitating exploratory discussions with key stakeholders including building and financial industry champions and local municipal administrators, finance departments, and planning departments to discuss and collectively advocate for policy changes to create an environment that will increase the supply of private market rental housing in York Region.



Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Awards for New Regional Buildings:

Tom Taylor Place
- LEED GOLD -

Mapleglen Residences
- LEED GOLD -

Leeder Place
Family Shelter
- LEED SILVER -

2. Sustain the existing rental housing supply

The Region has policies and investment strategies that preserve the existing rental housing supply.

- ➔ The *Regional Official Plan, 2010* requires local municipalities to adopt policies that protect rental housing from demolition and conversion to condominium or non-residential use
- ➔ Some older social housing programs are funded through operating agreements with fixed expiry dates. When these agreements expire, the rental units can be lost from the social housing system. The Region has developed a model to protect these social housing units by entering into new, longer term operating agreements with social housing providers whose operating agreements expire in the near term.
- ➔ Former federal and provincial social housing programs were not designed to enable housing providers to accumulate the cash reserves needed to fund major repairs throughout the life of their buildings. The Region has addressed this gap by funding and/or administering a range of programs to support social housing providers in maintaining their buildings, including:
 - ✓ additional subsidy and secured loan programs, which have provided more than \$7.5 million in Regional funding to 21 housing providers from 2007 to 2013.
 - ✓ more than \$15.6 million in provincial Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program funding to optimize energy efficiency and building element life span
 - ✓ technical support services for housing providers to assist them with capital planning and major repair projects
 - ✓ shared purchasing initiatives to reduce building maintenance and repair costs
- ➔ The Region invests \$500,000 annually in the Social Housing Innovation Fund. The fund provides grants to enable housing providers to retrofit their buildings to improve accessibility and energy efficiency. Housing providers can also apply to the fund for grants to help pay for new playgrounds that meet current safety standards.

Housing York, the Region's housing company, invests in sustainability initiatives and plans for the long term health of its social housing portfolio.

- ➔ Housing York's mission is "*Building Strong Communities*". The 2012-2016 Housing York Strategic Plan supports this mission with five goals: Sustain Healthy Communities, Manage Properties Effectively, Manage Finances Proactively, Provide User Friendly Services and Strengthen Governance and Organizational Capacity. Work on a range of initiatives to support these goals is already well underway.
- ➔ Housing York has implemented an Energy Management strategy to reduce electricity, gas and water consumption. As a result, every year Housing York is saving \$360,000 in utility costs. Tenants who pay their own utilities are collectively saving \$152,000 a year.

The Region works closely with its partners to enhance the social housing system.

- ➔ The Region engages housing providers in consultations on implementation of the *Housing Services Act, 2011* and major repair planning.
- ➔ The Region co-chairs a provincial working group tasked with researching and identifying best practices to finance housing providers' long term capital funding requirements.
- ➔ Provide training to housing providers through partnerships with the Cooperative Housing Federation, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Housing Services Corporation.

3. Support home ownership affordability

The Region's Official Plan and related implementation strategies support home ownership affordability.

- ➔ The Regional Official Plan, 2010:
 - ✓ It is council policy that a minimum of 25% of all new housing units across the Region be affordable and a minimum of 35% of new housing units in regional centres and key development areas be affordable
 - ✓ Requires inclusion of affordable housing policies in secondary plans
 - ✓ Encourages intrinsically affordable housing through modest amenities, standard materials, minimal details and flexibility within units
 - ✓ Supports density bonusing in exchange for community benefits
- ➔ In the publication, *In the Zone*, the Ontario Human Rights Commission recognized the Region's leadership in approving a Regional Official Plan (2010) that outlines specific policies for promoting an appropriate mix and range of affordable housing.
- ➔ The Region supports implementation of the Official Plan through:
 - ✓ Preparation of Regional and local forecasts for amount, location, mix and type of units
 - ✓ A Centres and Corridors website and related social media that provide information and gather public feedback
 - ✓ Preparation of Planning Activities and Approvals quarterly reports, including development approval statistics
 - ✓ Pre-consultation meetings to contribute to design and layout of development applications
 - ✓ Review and approval of local official plans to ensure alignment with Regional policies



**In 2013,
the Region's
Community
Investment
Strategy provided
funding to
community
agencies to
provide supports
to approximately
34,000 York Region
residents who
were homeless
or at risk of
homelessness.**

**Services funded
included:**

- - drop-in-centres and outreach programs
- - education for newcomer residents and services that help residents find housing
- - youth counselling, mental health supports and employment services
- - seasonal overnight shelters, meal programs and referrals to essential services

The Region supports home ownership affordability.

- ➔ The Region administers provincial funding and a Regionally funded Homelessness Prevention Program to provide energy and mortgage arrears support for low income homeowners.
- ➔ The Region has partnered with the Human Services Planning Board to Host a Housing Affordability Discussion Series with a focus on affordable private market ownership housing.

4. Strengthen the homelessness and housing stability system

The Region is reforming homelessness and emergency shelter services.

In 2012, Regional Council approved a vision for coordinated, integrated service delivery that proactively helps people who are homeless obtain and retain housing and people at risk of homelessness remain housed. To implement this vision, the Region has:

- ➔ Improved evidence-based decision-making capacity by implementing the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), the national database for tracking homelessness
- ➔ Launched a new Housing Stability Program that helps households at risk in York Region get and keep their housing, with client centred, wrap-around homelessness supports and prevention services
- ➔ Piloted a rent assistance program, based on Housing First principles that provides rent subsidy and housing support services to move homeless residents into permanent housing as quickly as possible
- ➔ The Community Paramedicine pilot program assesses emergency shelter clients' health needs and connects them people to preventative and supportive health services. This program has the added benefit of reducing emergency room visits

The Region is strengthening the homelessness and housing stability system through the Community Investment Strategy and community partnerships.

- ➔ A homelessness supports project that brings together many members of the faith community to partner in delivering shelter services, meals, health services and a clothing bank

- ➔ A mobile community outreach service that links with network partners to provide a range of supports including basic needs, harm reduction supplies and referrals to community services, for homeless residents
- ➔ A homeless program that offers emergency overnight shelter, clothing, food and laundry and access to additional on and off site services including health and employment support
- ➔ A partnership between Low-Income Energy Assistance Program and the Region's Homelessness Prevention Program has developed a "no wrong door" experience for residents in need of assistance with energy arrears

The Region supports homeless and homelessness prevention services for people with disabilities, mental health and substance use through:

- ➔ Needle exchange through the street outreach van
- ➔ Assisting clients with applications for ODSP
- ➔ STEPS – alcohol abuse and employment program
- ➔ Providing outreach support through specialized caseworkers to address the complex needs of at risk resident in the community and homeless clients
- ➔ Supporting residents with multiple barriers, including mental health and other risk factors, to avoid homelessness through counseling and community referrals provided by Integrated Social Workers
- ➔ Providing basic home care support through Homemakers and Nurses Services so low income residents can remain in their homes longer and avoid long term care costs

The Region provides service enhancement for victims of domestic violence.

Addressing the housing needs of victims of domestic violence is a shared responsibility. Emergency shelter, transitional housing and support services for victims of domestic violence are provincially funded.

The Region's primary role in the domestic violence system is administration of the provincially mandated special priority program. Special priority gives top waiting list ranking to subsidized housing applicants who have been abused by someone they live with or by someone sponsoring them as an immigrant. Over the past five years, about 50 per cent of all non-senior rent-geared-to-income vacancies have been filled by special priority households.

The Region further supports the housing needs of victims of domestic violence by:

- ➔ Dedicating staff resources to work closely with victims of domestic violence applying for subsidized housing. Staff at the Region's Housing Access Unit provide clients with detailed information, community referrals, and maintain regular contact with special priority applicants while they wait for subsidized housing.

- ➔ Providing on-site support at Violence Against Women (VAW) Shelters. Social Assistance Case Coordinators from the Homelessness Community Program Unit visit all five of the VAW shelters in the Region on a weekly basis. The Case Coordinators provide a number of supports to clients, including assessing financial eligibility for a Personal Needs Allowance, Ontario Works benefits, and discharge supports to help clients secure and maintain permanent accommodation through the Region's Housing Stability Program.

The Region funds and administers a domiciliary hostel system that provides supported housing services for people with disabilities and mental health needs.

York Region provides support for residents who need supervision of their daily living activities in domiciliary hostels. Domiciliary hostels are an important part of a broad system of housing and supports services for people who are at risk of homelessness. The program includes:

- ➔ Licensing over 650 domiciliary hostel beds through York Region's Lodging House By-law and monitoring compliance with standards of care for residents
- ➔ Administering agreements with domiciliary hostel operators to fund financial support for board and lodging and a monthly personal needs allowance for about 400 residents
- ➔ Funding for Quality of Life Programs for domiciliary hostel residents to enhance social inclusion
- ➔ Providing a Regionally-funded clothing allowance to ensure domiciliary hostel residents have adequate and weather appropriate clothing
- ➔ Providing financial and support services to domiciliary hostel residents and making referrals to appropriate community resources to enable them to maintain their housing

The Region supports social housing applicants and tenants by:

- ➔ Providing social work support services for tenants of social housing
- ➔ Delivering the Eviction Prevention Assistance program for market tenants in social housing who are at risk of losing their housing. The program provides up to two years of rent subsidy to tenants and co-operative members to enable them to stabilize their housing situations
- ➔ Maintaining a detailed special needs housing directory to assist applicants in finding housing that best meets their needs

Organizations wishing to cite any portion of the Housing Solutions report are requested to use the following citation when referencing this document: The Regional Municipality of York. (2014). *Housing Solutions: A place for everyone*. Newmarket, Ontario

A place for **everyone**



Sources:

¹ CMHC, Housing Now, GTA, January 2014

² SPB calculations based on CMHC, Housing Now, 2004-2014

³ CMHC, Rental Market Report, Fall 2013

⁴ TREB, Market Watch, 2013

⁵ SPB calculations based on TREB, Market Watch data, 2003-2013

⁶ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Estimates, 2003-2012. Note: 2013 median hourly wage calculated using CPI adjustment.

⁷ Statistics Canada, 2011 Census



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