

# HOUSING SOLUTIONS

A place for everyone

PHASE 2 PLAN 2019 TO 2023



HOUSING SERVICES  
[york.ca/housing](http://york.ca/housing)

  
**York Region**



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City of Markham



Regional Councillor  
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City of Markham



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City of Markham



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City of Richmond Hill



Regional Councillor  
Mario Ferri  
City of Vaughan

## A Message from York Region Chairman and CEO and Members of Regional Council

Housing is a fundamental need. It supports positive health and social outcomes and connects residents in The Regional Municipality of York to our economy, transportation systems and community services. York Regional Council is committed to supporting complete communities that offer a full range of housing options and services to meet the needs of residents at all ages and stages of their lives.



Regional Councillor  
Carmine Perrelli  
City of Richmond Hill



Regional Councillor  
Gino Rosati  
City of Vaughan

This 2019 to 2023 plan builds on the successes of the first phase of *Housing Solutions*, York Region's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. The plan provides an updated long-term strategic direction, while remaining responsive to new opportunities and challenges impacting residents and the housing and homelessness system.



Mayor  
John Taylor  
Town of Newmarket



Regional Councillor  
Linda Jackson  
City of Vaughan

Together with our partners, York Region is focused on helping residents find and keep appropriate housing. This plan aligns with our vision of creating strong, caring, safe communities.



Regional Councillor  
Tom Vegh  
Town of Newmarket



Mayor  
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Regional Councillor  
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# CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>4</b>
York Region’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan .....	4
<b>Background and Landscape</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Our Progress from 2014 to 2018 .....	6
Completing the Update .....	8
The Baseline: Housing Need in York Region Today .....	8
York Region’s Housing and Homelessness System .....	11
<b>A New Plan for 2019 to 2023</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Partnerships are Key to <i>Housing Solutions</i> .....	12
<b>Goals and Actions</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Goal 1: Increase the Supply of Affordable and Rental Housing</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Goal 2: Help People Find and Keep Housing</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Goal 3: Strengthen the Housing and Homelessness System</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Reporting on our Progress</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Community Consultation Highlights</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Housing and Homelessness System Indicators</b> .....	<b>31</b>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Housing is one of the foundations of complete communities. Complete communities support healthy and active living and meet people's needs throughout their lifetime by providing access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, public service facilities, and a full range of housing to accommodate a range of incomes and household sizes.<sup>1</sup>

In 2014, The Regional Municipality of York (York Region) began implementing its first 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, *Housing Solutions*. The plan has provided a roadmap for the Region, working in partnership with local cities and towns, community organizations, non-profit housing

providers and the private sector, to address residents' housing needs, support the creation of complete communities and promote economic development and social inclusion.

Phase 2 of the plan continues to provide a coordinated framework to address housing affordability and advance homelessness prevention and related support services. It also helps to align the work of multiple partners and sectors involved in housing, as well as other key Regional strategies and plans through an overall outcome statement:

**“Together with our partners,  
we help people find and  
keep appropriate housing.”**

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<sup>1</sup> “Complete communities” are defined in Ontario's Growth Plan.



# Our goals

This plan replaces the original *Housing Solutions* goals with three updated goals that reflect what we heard from residents and partners.

1



**Increase the supply of  
affordable and rental  
housing**

2



**Help people find  
and keep housing**

3



**Strengthen the housing  
and homelessness  
system**

# BACKGROUND AND LANDSCAPE

## OUR PROGRESS FROM 2014 TO 2018

*Housing Solutions* initially set out four goals and 49 actions that focused on increasing and sustaining rental housing supply, affordable ownership housing and strengthening the homelessness and housing stability service system.



**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
- Provide supports 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

Between 2014 and 2018, York Region worked with internal and external partners to implement the original 49 actions. By the end of 2018, 46 actions had been completed or were in progress, with details provided in *York Region's 2018 Progress Report*. Highlights include:

• **Building new community rental housing units:**

Leveraged provincial and federal capital funding to open 327 new community rental housing units. Another 427 units are under construction, with 162 set to open in 2019 in the City of Vaughan. The Region also secured 30 units under a rent assistance agreement to provide affordable housing to people on the subsidized housing wait list and five condominium units that provide additional affordable rental options.

- **Developing and implementing a Development Charge Deferral Policy:** In partnership with the Town of Newmarket, piloted a 36-month development charge deferral resulting in the first new private, purpose-built rental apartment building in decades, offering 225 units. The rental deferral is now a Region-wide policy, and the Region is working towards a Purpose Built Rental Incentives Community Improvement Plan, developed in collaboration with local cities and towns to offer additional incentives to support rental housing that is affordable to households with mid-range incomes.



### ***Housing Solutions* aligns with key Regional plans and policies**

Housing is a priority identified in York Region’s three main guiding documents:

- Vision 2051, the long-term vision for the future of York Region
- Regional Official Plan, York Region’s key growth management policies
- Corporate Strategic Plan, which sets out key priorities and actions to work toward Vision 2051 over each term of Council

*Housing Solutions* supports these plans by providing an overall vision and plan to help address housing and homelessness needs in York Region.

- **Creating an integrated and coordinated homelessness supports service delivery model:** All emergency housing facilities have revised their service delivery model to focus on client-centric wraparound support that prevents homelessness before it happens and ends homelessness by helping clients find and retain housing.
- **Opening two new emergency and transitional housing facilities:** Offering a safe place to stay, drop-in services, wraparound supports and aftercare for adult women (Belinda’s Place) and youth aged 16 to 24 (Richmond Hill Youth Hub).
- **Implementing the Home Now program:** Providing individuals and families who have experienced chronic homelessness in York Region with a Housing First-approved service that helps them locate and retain housing and remain stable in the community. This program is delivered on behalf of the Region by the Canadian Mental Health Association and offers case management services, housing supports, rent assistance and wraparound supports.

With the majority of the original *Housing Solutions* actions set to be completed, in 2018 the Region began reviewing the goals and developing an updated plan for 2019 to 2023.

## COMPLETING THE UPDATE

To complete the review and update of *Housing Solutions*, we took stock of accomplishments over the past five years and what remains to be done, as well as how the Region's economy and population have changed since 2014.

We engaged community service providers and people with lived experience of homelessness through focus groups to learn more about resident needs. Surveys were used to gather information from Regional staff, members of the community and private sector landlords and developers. Through two workshop sessions, staff from 23 community agencies reviewed the 2014 goals and discussed opportunities in York Region's housing and homelessness system.<sup>2</sup>

We also drew on quantitative data from *Housing Matters* and *I Count* to better understand current housing, program and social needs in York Region.

The updated plan for 2019 to 2023 was informed by the consultations, research and an in-depth needs assessment of housing and homelessness in York Region.

*Housing Matters* (2019) is a technical analysis of York Region's housing market, demographic trends and homelessness prevention programs and services.

*I Count* is an enumeration and survey of people experiencing homelessness conducted in April 2018.

## THE BASELINE: HOUSING NEED IN YORK REGION TODAY

York Region's population and economy are growing and diversifying, but the housing supply has not kept pace with residents' needs. The mix and range of housing, together with the increase in housing prices and lack of purpose-built rental in York Region today is not well-matched to the current or forecasted needs of the community. It has become more difficult for many residents to find housing that is right for them at a price they can afford.

**Rental housing** is in particularly short supply, with very few rental options at all price points for those who cannot afford to own, or for whom the flexibility and cost of renting would better meet their housing needs<sup>3</sup>. Although there has been growth in the rental housing supply, almost all has been in the secondary rental market. York Region's limited supply of purpose-built rental<sup>4</sup> units means there are very few options for renters and those that do exist are becoming more expensive. More purpose-built rental housing is needed, including both community housing<sup>5</sup> and affordable market-rate housing.

At the same time, the **cost of home ownership** has risen significantly, particularly for ground-related housing<sup>6</sup>. With a significant percentage of new construction focusing on large single-detached homes or small condominium units, there are few affordable ownership options for people with low and moderate incomes, including seniors, young families and newcomers. This has resulted in a need for more diversity in our housing supply, including more

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<sup>2</sup>Key consultation findings are summarized in Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup>The secondary rental market refers to housing originally built for the ownership market now rented to a tenant, such as condominiums, basement apartments and ground related homes.

<sup>4</sup>The purpose-built rental market, also referred to as the primary rental market, refers to rental housing built and operated as rental housing by the private-sector or through government-sponsored programs.

<sup>5</sup>Community housing refers to housing units owned and operated by non-profit and cooperative housing providers as well as Housing York Inc. Community housing units may offer subsidized rents linked to tenant income and/or rents set relative to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) average market rents for York Region.

<sup>6</sup>Ground-related housing refers to single-detached, semi-detached and townhouse units.

family-sized units in medium- and high-density communities and smaller ground-related units.

Very few **housing options** in York Region of any type are affordable to the lowest-earning 40% of residents – those earning roughly less than \$80,000 in 2018. While some of these households are eligible for housing subsidies, the available supply cannot meet the need.

Residents with mid-range incomes<sup>7</sup> are also facing growing challenges in finding housing they can afford. Across York Region, the average resale price for all structure types was approximately \$916,449 in 2018, which is not affordable to this income group. Only 11% of new ownership units were affordable to the highest earning mid-range income households, and 97% of affordable units were one-bedroom condominiums. No new units were affordable to the lowest earning mid-range income households.

When housing is unaffordable, residents have less money to spend on other needs and are less resilient to crisis. For some, increased **housing instability or homelessness** may be the result.

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<sup>7</sup>Mid-range income households are the 20% of households between the lowest and highest earning 40% of households; those earning between \$80,000 and \$120,000 in 2018.

## Can the secondary rental market meet the need for rental housing in York Region?

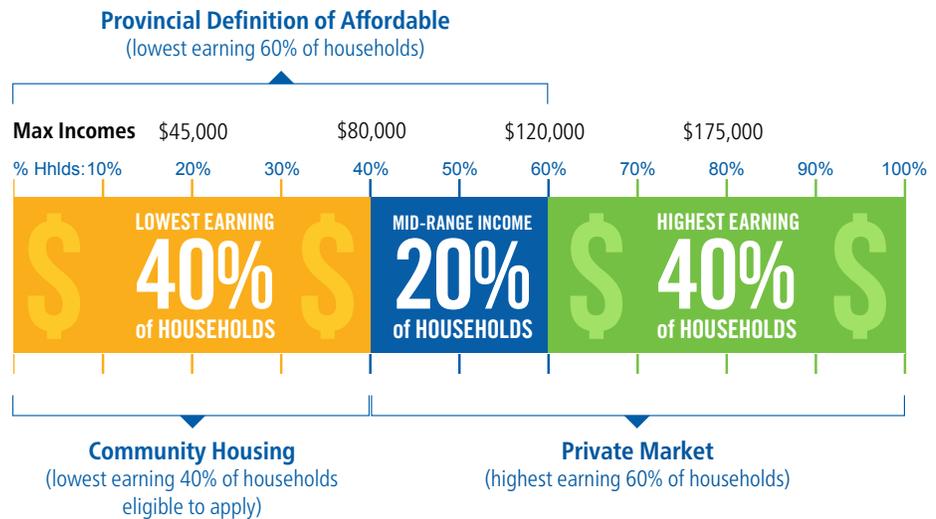
Most of the growth in the Region's rental housing supply has been in the secondary rental market, driven in part by a 116% increase in rented condominiums between 2012 and 2018. CMHC data from 2018 indicates about 28% of condominium units in York Region were rented. While this has led to more rental housing options, secondary market units have less security for tenants because they may be more easily evicted for personal use of the unit by the landlord or a member of their family. Rental condominiums tend to be more expensive than purpose-built rental housing and may not provide suitable options for families with children.

Although the secondary rental market plays a key role in meeting rental housing demand in York Region today, the Region's plan focuses on purpose-built rental housing where we can have the biggest impact in providing stable, affordable housing options.

### "Right-sizing" the housing supply

During the consultations, participants discussed the need for affordable housing options that enable seniors to continue to live in their communities, either independently or with support. At the same time, families with children may be living in units that are too small, both to remain close to public transit and other community services and because suitably-sized housing is not affordable. These comments indicate a need for more data and policies that support "right-sized" housing options that correspond to the Region's current and projected demographics and urban structure.

## Housing Segments by Income



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 incomes by decile, Canadian Price Index (unadjusted).

### Are more people in York Region homeless or at risk of homelessness?

We can't say for sure that homelessness in York Region is increasing overall because homelessness is often not visible. Estimates suggest that up to 80% of homelessness is hidden in Canada.

*I Count* connected with people in emergency housing, on the streets and people experiencing hidden homelessness, such as couch surfing or staying with friends and family.

Another enumeration will take place in 2020 led by United Way Greater Toronto to continue to build our understanding of homelessness in York Region.

Individuals and families living in housing that is unaffordable can be at risk of homelessness. When at risk households experience a crisis, such as sudden job loss, family breakdown or a major health issue, they are more likely to experience homelessness than people living in housing that is affordable.

*I Count*, York Region's 2018 homeless enumeration took place over a four-day period and found that an estimated 389 people were experiencing homelessness in our community. This included 100 individuals who met the definition of "chronic homelessness" – those homeless for six or more months in the past year.

From 2014 to 2018, the number of households on the Region's subsidized housing wait list grew by 41%. Applicants who received a subsidized unit in 2018 waited on average at least seven or more years.

Seniors – applicants aged 60 and older – had the shortest wait times at about seven years, while families waited on average almost 10 years and non-senior single applicants waited more than 12 years<sup>8</sup>. Those applicants applied to the wait list at a time when the demand for rent subsidies and the size of the wait list was less than half of its current size. With an average of 332 units becoming available each year, those applying now will likely wait longer than those who applied eight to ten years ago. About 90% of applicants on the Region's wait list reported incomes below \$40,000. While subsidized units are an important part of the Region's housing system, we also need to find new ways of doing things, including providing flexible, portable and short-term subsidies.

As our population increases, ages and diversifies, there is also a growing need for affordable **housing programs** that combine housing and support. This includes supporting people with complex needs or barriers that impact their housing stability, such as mental health or addiction issues. Offering housing options for individuals and families at all ages and stages of their lives supports positive economic, social and health outcomes.

<sup>8</sup> Wait times presented are averages for chronological applicants – those on the general subsidized housing wait list who were housed in order of their application date. In accordance with provincial requirements, the Region provides priority to survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. Special priority applicants housed in 2018 waited an average of about two years.

# YORK REGION'S HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SYSTEM

Complete communities have a range of housing options for people at every age and stage of life. York Region's housing system consists of five main "segments" that serve residents throughout their lives as their needs and circumstances change.

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION, EMERGENCY AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) SHELTERS

For people at risk of homelessness, provides supports so they can remain stably housed. For people that do become homeless, provides a safe, temporary place to stay and wraparound supports to secure and retain housing as quickly as possible.

- Delivered by community agencies
- Provincial and/or Regional funding
- Region administers emergency and transitional housing
- Province directly administers VAW sector

## SUPPORTIVE AND SUPPORTED HOUSING AND LONG-TERM CARE

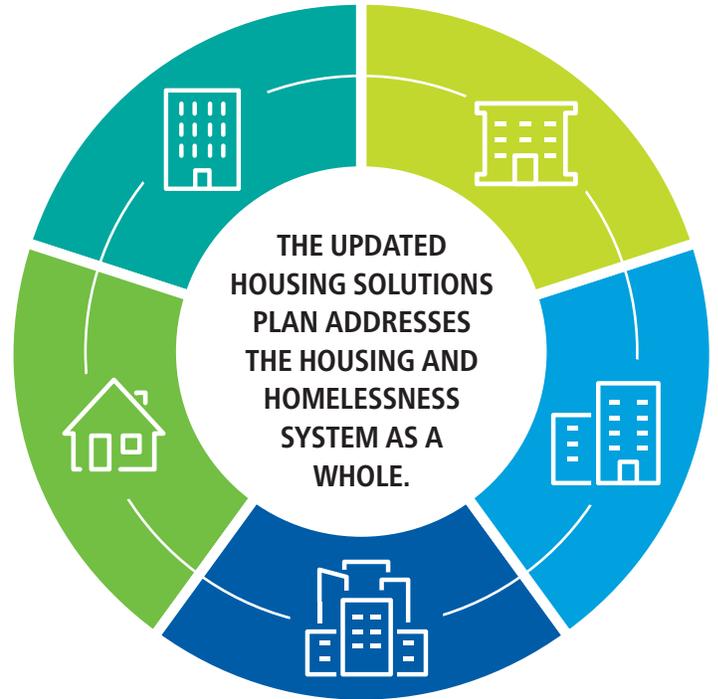
Includes permanent supportive housing for people with developmental disabilities, mental health and addictions issues, assisted living for seniors, long-term care and group homes as well as additional supports and assistance.

- Provincial and/or Regional funding
- Region owns and operates two long-term care homes
- Permanent supportive housing is a provincial responsibility

## PRIVATE SECTOR RENTAL HOUSING

Includes both purpose-built and secondary market rental housing. To support rental affordability, the Region also has rent supplement agreements with some private sector landlords.

- Delivered by private sector developers and landlords
- Local cities and towns approve planning applications
- Regional and local purpose-built rental incentives



## COMMUNITY HOUSING

Sometimes referred to as social and affordable housing, provides subsidized or below-market rents to low and moderate income households.

- Delivered by non-profit and cooperative housing providers and Housing York Inc.
- Funded and administered by the Region

## PRIVATE SECTOR OWNERSHIP HOUSING

Units in ownership tenure includes both new and resale markets and all built forms.

- Delivered by private sector developers
- Local cities and towns approve planning applications

# Our goals

1



**Increase the supply of  
affordable and rental  
housing**

2



**Help people find  
and keep housing**

3



**Strengthen the housing  
and homelessness  
system**

## A NEW PLAN FOR 2019 TO 2023

This document represents a renewal of *Housing Solutions* for phase 2 of the plan, from 2019 to 2023.

The plan replaces the original *Housing Solutions* goals with three updated goals that reflect what we heard through community consultations and a needs assessment.

The updated goals build on the achievements and progress made between 2014 and 2018, while recognizing the ongoing challenges and new trends that are shaping York Region's housing and homelessness system today.

Each goal has specific objectives for the next five years and key actions for 2019 and 2020. Annual progress reports to York Regional Council will identify new actions to continue to work towards the plan's objectives.

The *Housing Solutions* Plan for 2019 to 2023 focuses on working to ensure our communities have a full range of housing options that enable people to stay in their communities as they move into adulthood, begin careers and families and grow older. The plan is aimed largely at continuing to invest in and work with partners to support and encourage an increase of affordable and market-rate rental and affordable ownership housing. For those who need help to successfully find and keep housing, the plan recognizes the need to provide supports that residents need, when they need them. Recognizing the ongoing evolution of the housing and homelessness system, the plan sets out actions focused on thoughtful planning, advocacy and engagement that will build capacity and strengthen the existing system.

### Partnerships are Key to *Housing Solutions*

York Region cannot achieve the updated *Housing Solutions* goals and actions alone. Whether it is delivering the services people need or building new housing, everyone has a role to play in the housing and homelessness system.

The Region will focus future investments and direct service delivery on issues that are within our mandate as Service Manager, while continuing to work with local cities and towns, community housing providers and agencies, and the private sector, and advocating for investments by the federal and provincial governments.



“Together with our partners,  
we help people find and  
keep appropriate housing.”

To achieve the goals and actions of this plan, maintaining, building and expanding partnerships is critical. This includes working with community partners to address homelessness and housing instability and supporting seniors' housing needs through the Region's Seniors Strategy. York Region engaged with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation in planning *I Count*. The Region will continue to seek input on housing options and services that reflect the needs of Indigenous peoples in York Region.

# KEY PARTNERS

## IN YORK REGION'S HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SYSTEM

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### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Established the National Housing Strategy in 2017
  - Provides funding directly to community entities throughout Canada to provide services and supports for people who are experiencing homelessness. In York Region, the community entity is United Way Greater Toronto
  - Through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canada's national housing agency, provides funding to provinces and territories for affordable housing, sets policies that shape the overall housing market and provides mortgage loan insurance and residential mortgage securitization to financial institutions
- 



### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

- Responsible for the overall legislative framework for community housing, affordable housing, homelessness and many related frameworks and programs, such as social assistance, health and mental health
  - Provides funding to municipal service managers, such as York Region, for affordable housing and for homelessness and housing stability services
  - Responsible for supportive housing<sup>9</sup>
  - Establishes provincial land use rules and regulations and the Growth Plan
- 



### YORK REGION

- Funds community housing providers and rent subsidy programs, administers the subsidized housing wait list and plans, administers and delivers supports for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness
  - Designated by the province as Service Manager for community housing and homelessness services
  - Responsible for the Region's growth management framework, established through the Regional Official Plan in accordance with provincial direction
  - Establishes affordable housing targets in accordance with provincial direction, and works with local cities and towns to encourage and promote the development of affordable rental and ownership housing options
  - Owns and operates affordable housing units across the Region
- 



### LOCAL CITIES AND TOWNS

- Establishes and implements detailed land use plans and zoning rules to guide growth and support affordable housing
  - On the ground implementation of Regional and provincial planning policy through the development review and approval process
- 



### HOUSING DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY AND LANDLORDS

- Builds new housing, working with a wide range of partners including financial institutions and investors
  - Owns and operates purpose-built rental housing and secondary market rental housing
- 



### COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Deliver a broad range of programs and services for residents with low and moderate incomes
- Community housing providers own and operate community rental housing for households with low and moderate incomes and people with disabilities



# Goals and Actions



The following sections explain each of the three goals, what we are already doing to advance each goal and new objectives to guide our actions over the next five years. Each objective includes one or more actions to be carried out over 2019 and 2020. Some of the actions are already underway with York Regional Council approval, or they fall within authority delegated to staff. Each objective includes one or more performance measures to help us to track our progress as we implement this plan.

As significant changes are anticipated over the next two years related to provincial, and potentially federal, housing and homelessness strategic directions and funding, this plan identifies actions for years one and two of its five years. Action items for later years will be developed and submitted for York Regional Council approval as part of the annual progress reports. Actions to be recommended for future years will be based on such factors as progress on 2019 and 2020 actions, findings of planned research and reviews, changes in senior government directions and funding and system indicators, which will be monitored to identify issues and trends in the housing and homelessness system.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Supportive housing generally refers to a combination of housing assistance (such as rent-gated to income, rent supplements and housing allowances) and supports (such as counselling, personal support and case management) that enables people to live as independently as possible in their community. In Ontario, the province is responsible for funding supportive housing.

<sup>10</sup>Appendix 2 highlights the system indicators and key 2018 data

## Goal

# 1 Increase the supply of affordable and rental housing

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## Why this is important

### **A healthy supply of affordable and rental housing is the foundation of *Housing Solutions***

Increasing the supply of rental housing – including affordable and market units – is a strategic priority for York Region. There is also a need for more affordable ownership options. The intent is for the Region to do what it can, along with its partners, to make sure residents have a range of housing options for all ages and stages of their lives.

Goal one sets out our long-term strategy and short-term actions to help address the affordable and rental housing supply in York Region. Our plan will build on key achievements from 2014 to 2018 in promoting purpose-built rental housing development, such as York Regional Council’s approval of a 36-month development charge deferral and ongoing collaboration with local cities and towns and stakeholders. Implementing supportive planning policies and incentives will be essential to address the need for affordable ownership and market rental housing, as well as continued investment to grow the community housing supply.

Local cities and towns and upper-tier municipalities cannot address housing affordability without the support of other levels of government. Over the next five years, the Region will continue to advocate for sustained and enhanced federal and provincial investment and policies that support the rental housing supply and housing affordability.

## What we are already doing

Over the next five years, we will continue to:

- Implement Regional Official Plan policies that support and encourage housing affordability and work with local cities and towns to develop new planning policies and program approaches that support achievement of a full mix and range of housing options, including working together to implement the Region’s purpose-built rental housing incentives Community Improvement Plan, once approved
- Use existing financial incentives, including the 36-month development charge deferral, to stimulate the development of purpose-built rental housing in York Region and additional financial incentives for purpose-built rental to be considered by York Regional Council
- Complete annual ownership affordability and rental supply measuring and monitoring reports to identify challenges and gaps
- Implement universal design principles and build accessible units in new Housing York Inc. developments
- Support community housing providers to access federal and/or provincial funding for redevelopment

# How we will make progress on this goal

In 2019 and 2020, we will make progress on the objectives of goal one in the following ways:

OBJECTIVES	2019 ACTIONS	2020 ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<p><b>1. Plan for a full mix and range of housing options to support achievement of complete communities and promote economic development</b></p>	<p>1.1 Complete an update of <i>Housing Matters</i>, a technical document that supports the housing market needs assessment for York Region</p>	<p>1.2 Enhance Official Plan policies to direct substantial new growth in housing to areas well-served by transit and services</p>	<p>Percentage of new housing built in centres and corridors compared to other parts of the Region, year over year, by building type and location</p> <p>New housing built by structure type across the Region year over year</p>
<p><b>2. Implement tools and policies to increase the affordable housing supply</b></p>	<p>2.1 Complete a study of a mixed tenure development model, combining ownership and rental units, to increase the supply of affordable housing options</p> <p>2.2 Complete the Purpose-Built Rental Housing Incentives Package</p>	<p>2.3 Research programs to support affordable homeownership and identify potential partnership and pilot opportunities</p>	<p>Number of new private purpose-built rental housing units created year over year</p> <p>Number of private purpose-built rental units that have received Regional financial incentives</p>
<p><b>3. Build community housing and encourage affordable rental housing to meet the housing needs of low and moderate income households</b></p>	<p>3.1 Complete a portfolio management strategy for Housing York Inc. that identifies opportunities for existing properties (retain, redevelop, divest) aiming to leverage the value of land, review opportunities for future development and inform potential new capital funding strategies</p> <p>3.2 Complete construction of 162 Housing York units for families, singles and seniors in the City of Vaughan and begin rent-up</p>	<p>3.3 Provide resources and information to support community housing providers seeking to develop new housing</p> <p>3.4 Continue construction of 265 new Housing York units for seniors in the City of Markham (approved by York Regional Council in September 2015)</p> <p>3.5 Begin construction of approximately 100 new Housing York units in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville (land acquisition approved by York Regional Council in June 2018)</p> <p>3.6 Continue support for and allocation of federal-provincial funding to develop 32 new community housing units for seniors in the City of Markham (approved by York Regional Council in September 2016)</p> <p>3.7 Explore opportunities for Housing York portfolio growth in partnership with senior levels of government, local cities and towns, school boards, the private sector and others</p>	<p>Number of new community housing units created year over year</p>

## Goal

# 2 Help people find and keep housing



## Why this is important

### People at every age and stage of life sometimes need help to remain housed

Helping residents maintain stable housing is a priority for York Region. Although homelessness affects a small number of York Region's residents, high homeownership costs and limited supply of rental housing mean there are very few affordable options when someone loses their housing, particularly for people with the lowest incomes. Housing is an important social determinant of health<sup>11</sup>. Lack of stable housing can have negative physical and mental health impacts and result in disruptions to employment, education, social supports and access to services. Housing stability may be at risk for many different reasons, including factors such as sudden job loss, family breakdown or health issues, including mental health and addictions. Access to a wide range of flexible and individualized supports, when needed, can help people to maintain stable housing. This can include financial supports such as rent subsidies, personal supports such as help accessing health services and/or housing more suitable to the household's current needs.

Goal two outlines key actions to help our most vulnerable residents find and keep stable housing, whether they have already experienced chronic homelessness or they are at risk of losing their current housing. This goal includes a focus on preventing homelessness before it occurs by helping individuals and families keep their existing housing. Early interventions that help people keep their homes will help reduce reliance on more costly crisis interventions and housing supports, such as emergency housing.

This goal is closely interconnected with the first goal to increase the supply of a continuum of affordable and rental housing. Stable, affordable housing is an essential foundation that allows people to thrive and participate in their communities and is key to preventing and reducing homelessness.

## What we are already doing

Over the next five years, we will continue to:

- Support affordability in the private rental market by providing financial assistance through rent subsidy programs
- Fund and oversee subsidized and affordable homes for more than 6,700 households and administer the subsidized housing wait list to provide rental housing options for residents with low and moderate income
- Assess applicant eligibility for provincial special priority status on the subsidized housing wait list for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking and participate in the provincial Special Priority Portable Housing Benefit program that provides a portable rent subsidy to special priority applicants to access private market rental housing
- Help people who are at risk of homelessness with rent, utilities and other housing costs through the Homelessness Prevention Program and Housing Stability Program
- Oversee six emergency and transitional housing facilities delivered by community agencies that offer drop-in services, wraparound supports and after care programs that help people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness find stable housing and support their needs

<sup>11</sup> Social determinants of health are a broad range of social, economic and environmental factors that determine individual and population health, such as income level, employment, access to services and physical environments.

- Oversee the Housing with Supports Program, which offers supports with activities of daily living and housing to approximately 400 adults who are frail elderly or have physical or cognitive barriers living with low income, and the Home Now program which provides a Housing First-approved service that helps people who have experienced chronic homelessness find and keep housing
- Deliver funding through the Community Investment Fund for a wide range of community programs and projects that address housing stability and help people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, such as seasonal shelters, outreach, drop-in and eviction prevention
- Deliver long-term care for seniors at two Region-owned facilities

## How we will make progress on this goal

In 2019 and 2020, we will make progress on the objectives of goal two in the following ways:

OBJECTIVES	2019 ACTIONS	2020 ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<b>1. Deliver programs that help residents with low and moderate income living in private market housing keep their homes</b>	1.1 Pilot a local portable rent subsidy to help residents find and keep affordable housing	1.2 Review the local portable rent subsidy pilot	Number/percentage of clients on the wait list receiving supports to improve housing affordability
<b>2. Support long-term housing stability by strengthening individuals and communities</b>	2.1 Deliver programs and services to community housing residents that increase resilience and support community-building  2.2 Complete a comprehensive review of subsidized housing applicants on the Region's wait list to identify policies and practices to better connect people with alternatives to a subsidized housing unit	2.3 Develop policies and practices to respond to findings in the comprehensive wait list review that will better connect people with supports to help them find or keep appropriate homes	Percentage of clients receiving supports that improve housing stability, year over year
<b>3. Advance prevention programs through continuous improvements to help people at risk of homelessness remain stably housed</b>	3.1 Plan to integrate existing housing stability resources, including the Homelessness Prevention Program, into a streamlined approach that more effectively support people experiencing and at risk of homelessness	3.2 Help more people at risk of homelessness due to financial hardship become self-sustainable by providing temporary financial support and case management through the Short Term Assistance for Renters Program	Number of people at risk of homelessness who remain housed for at least six months
<b>4. Strengthen homelessness and housing stability services to help people experiencing homelessness to find and keep housing</b>	4.1 Implement a program to help people seeking shelter find safe accommodation and/or stabilize their housing without having to use emergency housing or seasonal shelter	4.2 Plan for the transformation of the Housing with Supports Program (formerly called the Domiciliary Hostels Program) into a service delivery model that aligns with the broader homelessness support system  4.3 Create a service delivery model for the planned new men's emergency housing facility	Number of people who access emergency housing who move on to long-term housing  Number of people who are diverted from emergency housing  Number and percentage of people experiencing chronic homelessness who remain housed for at least six months

## Goal

# 3 Strengthen the housing and homelessness system

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## Why this is important

### Addressing York Region's housing and homelessness needs requires planning as a system

Goal three sets out key actions to engage in research, planning and service enhancements within the approved budget that respond to evidence, changing regional needs and changing federal and provincial directions.

With the introduction of the National Housing Strategy, *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy*, and the Ontario Community Housing Renewal Strategy, the Region must continue its engagement with the federal and provincial governments to ensure services are responsive to needs. As the Region's funding agreements with community housing providers come to an end, finding new ways to work together will be important to support residents and protect the community housing supply.

Housing support services such as supportive housing are not within the Region's mandate as Service Manager. Instead, the Region's role in addressing the need for these services requires thoughtful planning, advocacy and engagement. Goal three focuses on working with other levels of government and key community stakeholders to ensure services are responsive to needs, and that the necessary planning and funding supports are in place to support a stronger and well-connected housing and homelessness system.

## What we are already doing

Over the next five years, we will continue to:

- Engage stakeholders across the province in planning for the long-term sustainability of the community housing system, including strategies to address end of operating agreements and mortgages
- Support community housing providers in managing their assets through regular building condition audits, capital repair loans and energy efficiency programs
- Support community housing providers to access federal and/or provincial funding for renovations and provide tax levy funding for innovative projects
- Deliver training to build capacity among community housing providers' boards of directors and staff
- Consult with community housing providers to develop policies, programs and processes to address changes in the housing system
- Work with community partners to implement coordinated service delivery for people experiencing homelessness through the use of a By Name List<sup>12</sup> and a community collaborative table
- Build service provider capacity to support people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness through research, information resource development and training activities
- Share program data and data from homeless enumeration to identify service system gaps and advocate for service enhancements
- Lead the development of the York Region Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

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<sup>12</sup> A By Name List is a real-time list of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in a community.

# How we will make progress on this goal

In 2019 and 2020, we will make progress on the objectives of goal three in the following ways:

OBJECTIVES	2019 ACTIONS	2020 ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<b>1. Sustain the existing stock of community housing</b>	1.1 Advocate to the provincial government for legislative and regulatory changes to sustain, modernize and enhance Ontario's community housing system 1.2 Deliver training to community housing providers on end of operating agreements and end of mortgages 1.3 Work with Service Managers across the province to develop a coordinated response to the end of mortgage issue for community housing providers mandated under the <i>Housing Services Act</i>	1.4 Use the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative to support community housing providers in maintaining their units in a good state of repair 1.5 Develop options to sustain existing rent subsidy programs after provincial funding arrangements end	Number of training/capacity building activities delivered for housing providers Number of community housing units that received capital funding to maintain a state of good repair, year over year Number of affordable rental units administered by York Region Number of rent-g geared-to-income units in York Region
<b>2. Build an integrated system to plan and deliver homelessness and housing stability services</b>	2.1 Work with United Way Greater Toronto in its role as the community entity for federal homelessness funding and with community partners to jointly develop a plan for a Coordinated Access system that will provide a process for intake, assessment and referral to be used by all partners 2.2 Work with community partners to strengthen the By Name list to prioritize and match individuals and families experiencing homelessness to appropriate services and supports (2019/2020)	2.3 Begin implementation of the coordinated access system by creating a "Main Access Point" for programs delivered or overseen by York Region. This will enable clients to access programs from one point of contact. Future phases will expand to include community partners as we work towards a systems approach 2.4 Support a homeless enumeration led by United Way Greater Toronto, to better understand the scope of homelessness in the community and the needs and barriers of people experiencing homelessness	Number of people referred to community collaborative table Number of people experiencing homelessness at a point-in-time
<b>3. Conduct research, engagement, and knowledge sharing to identify service system gaps and build community capacity in the homelessness and housing stability service system</b>	3.1 Participate in development of a community-led youth homelessness prevention and housing stabilization strategy 3.2 Engage people with lived experience of homelessness to inform service system planning 3.3 Explore options for programs that support tenants and landlords in York Region	3.4 Develop an inventory of housing and homelessness supports in York Region, for residents and case workers, to improve system navigation 3.5 Participate in Ontario Health Team collaborations and networks to influence policy, program design, and funding, and to advocate for the housing needs of York Region residents when they leave care	Number/percentage of department programs and services included in the inventory Percentage of Community Investment Fund organizations included in the inventory
<b>4 Encourage and facilitate expansion of long-term care to help residents age in their communities</b>		4.1 Advocate to improve policy planning and decision-making for long-term care beds by developing a forecast for York Region, including required number, type and location 4.2 Complete a study of potential future use of Newmarket Health Centre Site, such as for a seniors' campus of care and other seniors' housing options	Increase number of advocacy activities related to long-term care beds



Housing York Inc.'s Kingview Court, Township of King

## REPORTING ON OUR PROGRESS

Progress reports are an important tool to evaluate success in advancing the goals and objectives of this plan. We will continue to track progress under each goal and measure our performance over the next five years.

### **Annual Progress Reports:**

Progress reports will be provided annually to York Regional Council and will be posted publicly on the Region's website as required by the *Housing Services Act*, 2011.

### **Identifying New Actions:**

In addition to reporting on our accomplishments each year, we will propose new actions to be carried out the following year under each goal of the plan. This approach will allow us to respond to changing policy direction and funding from federal and provincial governments as well as emerging issues in our communities.



## CONCLUSION

York Region must have a full range of housing options and services that enable people to stay in their communities as they move into adulthood, grow older, or face challenges or barriers impacting their housing stability.

The *Housing Solutions* 2019 to 2023 Plan brings the housing and homelessness system together under long-term strategic directions while building flexibility to respond to the changing needs of York Region's communities. Working together as a system, York Region and its partners can continue helping residents find and keep affordable and appropriate housing.

## APPENDIX 1: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION HIGHLIGHTS

Everyone needs a place to live and call home. To make sure the 2019 to 2023 plan reflects the needs of the community, York Region held community consultations from September 2018 to January 2019 to learn more about what residents need today when it comes to their housing. Thank you to all of the participants who shared their experiences, observations and expertise with the Region.

Consultation participants were asked to share their feedback and ideas about:

- The four goals of *Housing Solutions*
- The housing challenges impacting residents with different needs
- Opportunities to strengthen York Region's system of housing and homelessness supports



# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SUMMARY

## WHO WE HEARD FROM

FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF *HOUSING SOLUTIONS*, YORK REGION'S 10-YEAR HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PLAN  
September 2018 to January 2019

**7** FOCUS GROUPS  
EXPLORED ISSUES IN DEPTH 

**Housing needs of survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking** (2 groups)

**Challenges experienced by people who are homeless**  
(2 groups – service providers and people with lived experience)

 **Housing for people who need support services** (1 group)  
**Regional staff consultation** (1 group)  
**Non-profit and cooperative housing** (1 group)

**47** FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS  
in total

INCLUDING **12** PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

**2** WORKSHOPS  
ENGAGED 23 PARTICIPANTS   
from a wide range of community agencies

Meeting with the **CHIPPEWAS OF GEORGINA ISLAND FIRST NATION**   
as part of a broader Community and Health Services Department engagement to begin **relationship-building**

 **36** COMMUNITY AGENCIES

that provide a wide range of supports that help people find and keep safe, stable housing were represented across the focus groups and workshops

**320** SURVEY PARTICIPANTS 

 **7** DEVELOPERS/REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS

**265** STAFF 

 **48** COMMUNITY MEMBERS

PRESENTATIONS AND 

**Q&A**  
sessions with

York Region Accessibility Advisory Council

Human Services Planning Board

York Region Local Municipal Housing Working Group

Private and non-profit developers and rental housing providers (via a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation event)

United Way Greater Toronto

York Region Homelessness Community Advisory Board

# Where we want to be

Consultation participants were asked to imagine where our community should be in five years, at the conclusion of the second phase of *Housing Solutions*:

- Residents can find and keep housing that meets their needs because there is a greater supply of affordable rental housing, including a variety of place-based subsidized housing options and portable subsidies, assisted by Regional and municipal policies and incentives that support a diverse mix and range of affordable housing options
- There is a collaborative system of supports in place that makes sure homelessness is prevented wherever possible and provides people who are experiencing homelessness with the assistance they need to find and keep housing, contributing to the goal of ending chronic homelessness
- People have access to a broad range of community supports, home health care and mental health and addictions services, as well as supported and supportive housing options that allow them to remain stably housed throughout their lives

# What we heard

The key themes that emerged from the consultations helped create a clear direction for this plan and its actions. The consultation feedback can be grouped into three main issues:

1. Increasing the supply of subsidized and affordable housing
2. Providing supports that help people stay stably housed
3. Preventing and reducing homelessness



# 1

## INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF SUBSIDIZED AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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Consultation participants saw affordable housing as a key part of complete communities and emphasized that it should have good connections to public transportation, services, employment and educational opportunities. Increasing and sustaining the supply of subsidized and affordable housing will also require advocacy to the federal and provincial governments and capacity-building in the subsidized housing sector to support ongoing growth. Participants told us that:

**Sustained and increased investment in the housing system by all orders of government is necessary to increase and sustain the supply of affordable housing options.**

- Investments in repair and new construction of subsidized rental housing to provide affordable housing options for residents with the lowest incomes
- Funding portable subsidies or housing allowances to help people afford private market rental housing and offer a way to quickly help people find homes that can best meet their needs
- Financial incentives to support private sector rental housing that is affordable to households with lower and moderate incomes, which could include grants or incentives for infrastructure and second suites as well as for new private, purpose-built rental units

**The Region and local cities and towns should continue to implement land use policies and planning tools to encourage and support diverse and affordable private market housing options.**

- Setting minimum affordable housing requirements for new developments, also known as inclusionary zoning
- More flexible zoning rules to encourage private sector development of rental housing and a wider range of housing options across the Region
- Encouraging infill development or requiring “rough-ins” for second suites in new developments

**The Region should explore innovative and creative approaches that could help sustain and increase the supply of affordable rental and ownership housing options in York Region.**

- Look for ways to optimize the current housing supply, including encouraging second suites, home-sharing and redevelopment of community sites such as former schools for housing
- Engage all potential partners, including local cities and towns, the private sector, non-profit and cooperative housing providers, school boards and faith communities, to understand who may be able to contribute resources, funding or expertise for affordable housing development
- Explore policy and program changes to the subsidized housing system in York Region to help target available subsidies and reduce wait times, with advocacy to the province where required
- Study creative strategies to support the development of affordable ownership housing, such as expanding cooperatives, alternative building forms such as tiny homes or shipping containers, or mixed tenure buildings that combine rental and ownership housing

## 2

### PROVIDING SUPPORTS THAT HELP PEOPLE STAY STABLY HOUSED

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For some households, income and high housing costs are the main barriers to finding and keeping stable housing, while others also need support to address other issues that impact their housing stability. Participants also said that the lack of support can make it more challenging for residents to stay in their homes safely and independently and may lead to frequent paramedic calls, emergency room visits or extended hospital stays. Participants told us that:

**A system of well-integrated support services provided by the Region, the province and a range of community partners to address a broad range of needs is required to support stable housing for residents, in addition to access to affordable housing.**

- Residents who are discharged from hospitals or treatment need access to a range of services that can provide seamless and timely assistance to help them maintain their housing stability
- Supports that can come into people's homes and supportive housing options with onsite staff are both part of the range of services needed by residents living with physical and developmental disabilities, cognitive impairments, mental health conditions and addictions
- The range of housing support programs should be responsive to the needs of different populations

**The Region should work with partners to implement and expand programs and services that help people maintain and increase their housing stability.**

- Service system navigation, peer support, programs to address isolation and loneliness, respite programs to help family caregivers and more home care assistance available in the evening or overnight are all options that could increase housing stability for residents with multiple barriers
- Partnerships with health care providers to offer services on-site and programs focused on building engagement in community housing communities should be expanded
- Financial assistance for homeowners with low and moderate income, such as assistance for energy efficiency retrofits, could also help maintain housing stability

**The province, York Region or local cities and towns should provide education and information resources for tenants, landlords and service providers to help increase individuals' housing stability and help maintain the housing system.**

- Raise awareness about programs and services that support housing stability among service providers and service users to improve access
- Implement skill building programs for tenants to encourage stable tenancies and prevent issues that can escalate and lead to eviction
- Provide landlords, especially those in the secondary market, with tools and resources to understand their responsibilities and rights, as well as information about how to support tenants

# 3 PREVENTING AND REDUCING HOMELESSNESS

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Although only a small fraction of people living in York Region experience homelessness in any given year, many more people may be at risk of losing their housing. Many of the consultation participants who work with people who are currently experiencing homelessness in York Region emphasized that it is increasingly hard for them to find housing and more people appear to be at risk of becoming chronically homeless. Participants told us that:

## **Affordable housing is critical to prevent, reduce and end homelessness.**

- Although ongoing support services are often essential to help people who have experienced homelessness stay housed, many cannot find housing in York Region that they can afford
- People who have experienced homelessness who do secure housing may only be able to afford single rooms or apartments that are in poor condition, leading to ongoing instability and repeat episodes of homelessness
- Increased availability of subsidized and affordable housing options and targeted rent subsidies for people experiencing homelessness are needed to address homelessness in York Region

## **Investment is needed to build capacity in the emergency and ongoing support services that help people when they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.**

- Building emergency shelter is not the answer to homelessness, but York Region's emergency housing facilities and seasonal shelters currently do not always have capacity to serve everyone who is in need
- Address barriers for people who access emergency housing and seasonal shelter in York Region, such as the lack of public transportation access to some facilities
- Invest in training and skills-building for staff who deliver homelessness and housing stability services

## **Continue to build on the work that has taken place over the past five years to strengthen collaboration and coordination across the homelessness and housing stability service system.**

- Continue to develop York Region's coordinated access system for homelessness and housing stability services
- Develop collaborative partnerships and improve coordination with the health system, child welfare system and justice system
- Work with partners to develop better system navigation processes and clear pathways for people experiencing mental health challenges

# APPENDIX 2: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SYSTEM INDICATORS 2018

## RENTAL SUPPLY

### VACANCY RATE

**1.7%** Purpose-built

**0.8%** Rental condo



CMHC 2018 Fall Rental Market Survey

## MARKET HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Average price** new single-detached home **\$1.24 million**

**Average resale price** for all housing types **\$916,449**

**Average rent** for purpose-built rental **\$1,267**

**Average rent** for condo rental **\$2,001**

**Estimated monthly housing costs** for owners (townhouse) **\$5,075**

Housing Matters 2019 (data sources: CMHC Housing Now, TREB Market Watch, Bank of Canada)

CMHC 2018 Fall Rental Market Survey



TREB data

**11%** Percent of new ownership housing that is affordable to households in the top 40% of earners. **In 2018, this was \$122,290 and above.**

Affordable Housing Measuring and Monitoring Report (June 2019)

## SUBSIDIZED HOUSING WAIT TIMES



**SENIORS** (housed in 2018) **length of time on wait list**

**7.8 years**



**NON-SENIOR SINGLE ADULTS** (housed in 2018) **length of time on wait list**

**12.5 years**



**FAMILIES** (housed in 2018) **length of time on wait list**

**9.7 years**

York Region, Community and Health Services Department

## SUBSIDIZED HOUSING WAIT LIST

**16,237** households **on wait list**

**1,613** Net increase in wait list applicants

**11%** increase from 2017



**301** people on the wait list **housed in 2018**

York Region, Community and Health Services Department

## HOMELESSNESS

**1,148** unique individuals accessing **emergency** and **transitional housing**



**25 days** average length of stay **in emergency housing**



**283 (24.1%)** unique individuals who experienced **chronic homelessness**

York Region, Community and Health Services Department

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

**2,599** people accessing **homelessness prevention programs**



**1,487** individuals waiting for York Region municipal **long-term care beds**



Local Health Integration Network

## System Indicators use data that is updated at least annually

The System Indicators will be updated every year to provide a snapshot of the state of York Region's housing system. This means that census data such as the percentage of households experiencing core housing need is not included. The 2019 *Housing Matters* update includes census data and will continue to inform the long-term Housing and Homelessness Plan.

### System Indicator Data Definitions:

**Rental supply** data is taken from the annual Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Fall Rental Market Survey, Greater Toronto Area

**Market housing affordability** indicators are based on data drawn from CMHC Housing Now reports, Toronto Real Estate Board (TREB) Market Watch reports and Bank of Canada data. Affordability analyses are carried out by Long Range Planning and are available every June through the Affordable Housing Measuring and Monitoring Report.

**Community housing** indicators are based on internal Community and Health Services databases and tracking.

**Average wait times** reflect the year that a household that began to receive a subsidy in 2018 applied to the wait list, on average. The data is broken down for seniors, non-senior single adults and families as wait times can be different for these households. Wait times for subsidized housing in York Region are generally increasing, but the length of time that any given household will have to wait depends on the household's size, age, building locations and priority level, as well as annual variations in the number of units that become available through turnover or new construction. In addition, because the wait list grows longer every year, wait times for households that are applying today are likely to be longer than a similar household that is already on the wait list.

**Net increase** in the wait list is based on the difference between the number of people on the wait list at year-end in 2018 and the number of people on the wait list at year-end in 2017. The net increase includes both new households that applied to the wait list and households that were removed because they began to receive a subsidy or allowed their application to lapse.

**Number of households housed** represents the number of people who were removed from the wait list in 2018 because they began to receive a housing subsidy.

**Average length of stay in emergency housing** is based on the average length of each admission to York Region year-round emergency housing programs that use Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). It does not include length of stay in Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, seasonal shelters or transitional housing.

**People who stayed in emergency and transitional housing** represents the number of unique individuals who stayed in a York Region emergency or transitional housing program that uses HIFIS in 2018. It does not include VAW or seasonal shelters.

**People experiencing chronic homelessness** includes all individuals who accessed homelessness services in York Region in 2018 who were homeless at the time they accessed services and had been homeless for six or more months in the past year (have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation).

**People who accessed a homelessness prevention program** includes all households who were assisted through a program that offers short-term financial assistance and case management to help them retain their housing and stabilize their situation.

**Long-term care** indicator is based on data from the Central Local Health Integration Network, which coordinates and manages long-term care home placement

**Number of individuals waiting for York Region municipal long-term care beds** includes individuals requesting placement into the Region's two long-term care homes.

**THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK**

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[york.ca/housing](http://york.ca/housing)

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