

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) AUGUST 27, 2002

**PRESENTATION BY YORK REGION STAFF
YORK REGION HOUSING SUPPLY STRATEGY
MUNICIPAL HOUSING FACILITIES BY-LAW**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

That the presentation of the Staff of the Region of York in respect of the York Region Housing Supply Strategy and the draft Municipal Housing Facilities By-law BE RECEIVED; and

That City Staff BE DIRECTED to report to a future Committee of the Whole meeting on the opportunities for the City of Vaughan to participate in the implementation of the York Region Housing Supply Strategy.

Purpose

The purpose of the presentation is to update Vaughan Council on the latest and future actions of the Region of York in respect of its Housing Supply Strategy and its draft Municipal Housing Facilities By-law.

Background - Analysis and Options

Background

a) Origin

At its May 3, 2001 meeting, Regional Council directed that a Housing Supply Strategy be developed to increase the supply of subsidized housing stock across the Region and to increase rental opportunities in the private market. Regional Staff was directed to focus on innovative approaches to increasing the affordable housing supply and to develop a significant role for public – private partnerships, to increase the supply of rental housing and to support lower income households seeking assisted housing.

An interim report was submitted to Regional Council on November 1, 2001, setting out a work plan for the preparation of the strategy. On January 31, 2002, a Regional Council Workshop was held, at which the Proposed Housing Supply Strategy was presented.

On February 11, 2002, City Council provided the following direction in respect of the proposed Regional Strategy.

1. That the verbal report of Regional Councillor Di Biase be received;
2. That a workshop be held at a Committee of the Whole (working session) meeting in February 2002 for members of Council to express their views; and
3. That staff provide a report regarding the various strategies proposed by York Region.

At the February 19, 2002, Committee of the Whole Working Session, Committee received a status report on the Proposed Region of York Housing Supply Strategy. Committee of the Whole adopted the following recommendation.

1. That staff be directed to report on a response to the proposed York Region Housing Supply Strategy, taking into account the concerns raised by Members of Council;
2. That the following report of the Commissioner of Planning, dated February 19, 2002, be received; and
3. That the Regional Council Workshop information package, to Mayor and Members of Council, dated January 31, 2002, and the pamphlet entitled, "Status Report, Proposed Housing Supply Strategy Regional Municipality of York, dated February 19, 2002, be received.

Council ratified this recommendation on February 25, 2002.

The requested follow-up report was sent to a Committee of the Whole Working Session on May 14, 2002. The report identified a number of principles that should form the basis for a protocol or understanding, which would govern the actions and decisions of the Regional Housing Authority in its relations with the local communities and municipal councils. This report forms Attachment No. 1 to this report. On May 27, 2002 Council ratified the recommendation of Committee of the Whole by adopting the following motion.

This report BE RECEIVED;

The principles identified in the report be endorsed as the basis for further discussion with the Region of York on their incorporation into the final Housing Supply Strategy;

Regional Staff BE REQUESTED to provide an update on the status of the Region's Proposed Housing Supply Strategy at an upcoming Committee of the Whole Working Session;

Final comment on the Region of York's draft Housing Supply Strategy be prepared for Council's consideration, if required, after completion of discussions with the Region;

This report be forwarded to the Region of York's Community Services and Housing and Planning and Development Services Departments.

On June 4, 2002 reports on the "Housing Supply Strategy for York Region" and the "Municipal Housing Facilities By-law" went forward to the Community Services and Housing Committee at the Region of York. Regional Council ratified the recommendations of the Committee on June 27, 2002. As a result the Housing Supply Strategy (Attachment No. 2) was approved and a Municipal Housing Facilities By-law was approved in principle.

Regional Council has directed that its Staff consult with the area municipalities on the implementation of the Housing Strategy and the Municipal Housing Facilities By-law. This presentation will allow Regional Staff to outline the content of the strategy and the draft by-law and provide details on the consultation program and the time lines for further action.

Further, the Regional Council resolution of June 27, 2002 included the following direction in respect of the Housing Supply Strategy.

1. This report be forwarded to area municipalities and those municipalities be asked to participate in meeting the goals of the Strategy by endorsing it and giving consideration to adopting local strategies and initiatives to encourage affordable housing development.

In this regard a recommendation has been included above, which directs City Staff to report back to a future Committee of the Whole meeting on the potential opportunities for the City to participate in the implementation of the Region's Housing Supply Strategy.

b) Context

One important consideration in evaluating the York Region Housing Supply Strategy is the fact that it is an important element in York Region's overall approach to growth management. Growth management is a multi-disciplinary planning exercise, which must take into consideration the range of forces that influence how growth and change occurs. Amongst the factors that need to be considered in making growth management decisions are: Housing supply; financial planning; economic development; urban form; human services planning; and transportation planning. These forces are inter-related and often act in concert. Therefore, the management of growth must take into account all of these relationships and apply regulation accordingly.

Over the last several years, the Region has been responding to the pressures of growth and downloading, by undertaking a number of initiatives. These include the Housing Supply Strategy, the York Region Rapid Transit Plan; the Transportation Master Plan; the Human Services Strategy; and Vision 2026. Staff are planning to prepare an information item for Council in the fall of 2002, outlining the status and content of these initiatives, their role in the management of growth in York Region and their implications for the activities of the City of Vaughan.

Conclusion

Vaughan Council requested this presentation by Regional Staff at its meeting on May 27, 2002. In addition, it is a component of the consultation process mandated by Regional Council on June 27, 2002. The Region has requested that the City participate in the Housing Supply Strategy by endorsing it and giving consideration to adopting local strategies and initiatives to encourage the development of affordable housing. The presentation will allow for the Region to put forward its case for the Housing Supply Strategy in the context of its overall growth management program. The City will then have to go through a period of evaluation to determine the degree to which it would like to participate in the program.

Therefore, it is recommended that the presentation from York Region Staff in respect of the York Region Housing Supply Strategy and the draft Municipal Facilities By-law be received. In addition, it is recommended that Staff report back to Committee of the Whole on the opportunities available to the City for its possible participation in the York Region Housing Supply Strategy. Should Council concur then the recommendations set out above should be adopted.

Attachments

1. Item 2, Report No. 38 of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), May 27, 2002
"Proposed Housing Supply Strategy – Region of York"
2. York Region Housing Supply Strategy – June 27, 2002

Report prepared by:

Roy McQuillin, Manager of Corporate Policy, ext. 8211

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL DeANGELIS
Commissioner of Planning
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An interim report was submitted to Regional Council on November 1, 2001, setting out a work plan for the preparation of the strategy. On January 31, 2002, a Regional Council Workshop was held, at which the Proposed Housing Supply Strategy was presented.

On February 11, 2002 Council provided the following direction in respect of the proposed strategy.

1. That the verbal report of Regional Councillor Di Biase be received;
2. That a workshop be held at a Committee of the Whole (working session) meeting in February 2002 for members of Council to express their views; and
3. That staff provide a report regarding the various strategies proposed by York Region.

At the February 19, 2002, Committee of the Whole Working Session, Committee received a status report on the Proposed Region of York Housing Supply Strategy. Committee of the Whole adopted the following recommendation.

1. That staff be directed to report on a response to the proposed York Region Housing Supply Strategy, taking into account the concerns raised by Members of Council;
2. That the following report of the Commissioner of Planning, dated February 19, 2002, be received; and
3. That the Regional Council Workshop information package, to Mayor and Members of Council, dated January 31, 2002, and the pamphlet entitled, "Status Report, Proposed Housing Supply Strategy Regional Municipality of York, dated February 19, 2002, be received.

Council ratified this recommendation on February 25, 2002. This report has been prepared in response to Council's direction, as set out above.

b) Analysis

As a result of the Province's downloading process, the Region of York has assumed responsibility for the provision of social and affordable housing. Evidence indicates that there is a substantial need for additional housing in this sector of the market. However, the provision of affordable housing is a challenging task, which needs to simultaneously address a number of important matters. These issues include funding, location, planning and social policy, community relations and the availability of both hard and soft services. As such, only limited numbers of social or affordable rental housing units have been built since the mid-1990's. York Region, in response to this situation, is developing a Housing Supply Strategy geared to address the deficiencies in this under-served segment of the market.

Financial considerations are perhaps the greatest obstacle to the delivery of affordable housing. The Federal and Provincial Governments have now signaled a willingness to re-enter the housing market with subsidies to support the construction of new affordable units. Provincial legislation permits the Region to offer, subsequent to the enactment of a "Municipal Housing Facilities By-law", incentives to the private sector to produce affordable housing. This can take the form of direct grants or waivers of development charges. The Region is currently pursuing a development charge exemption for Non-Profit Housing Corporations and is hoping to expand the program at a later date to include the private for-profit sector.

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With these inducements in place, there is a much greater chance that more affordable housing will be built. As a "Municipal Service Provider for Housing and Homelessness" under the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* the Region's mandate includes authorization to purchase a housing project, purchase land, construct housing, operate and maintain the housing and dispose of any such land or projects. Therefore, the Region has the power to provide the necessary housing. The return of funding from the senior levels of government and the Region's ability to offer other financial inducements will increase the likelihood that more affordable housing will be produced. The Region will also be requesting that the local municipalities provide similar financial relief.

The new housing supply strategy will be critical to developing the procedures necessary to deliver the required housing. Once past the funding issues, there are a number of other issues associated with affordable housing that have to be addressed. These issues can be based on public perception and result in resistance at the local level to the construction of new affordable units. The problems can also result from insensitive delivery of the program. As it is clear that the Region will be a provider and facilitator of affordable housing, the Region's Housing Supply Strategy must address the issues of delivery head-on as they will directly affect the local municipalities and their residents. To a substantial degree, the success of an affordable housing program can be measured by how well it serves its target population and its level of acceptance by the community.

Currently the draft Housing Supply Strategy provides only limited guidance as to how the delivery issues will be addressed. In the presentation to Regional Council on January 31, 2002, a number of "Principles for Housing Investment" were identified, some of which relate to implementation. They included:

- Integration;
- Permanent Affordability;
- Focus on Modest Form;
- Intensification of Nodes and Corridors;
- Links to Transit, Services, Employment;
- Addresses Social Housing Waiting List;
- Accountability; and
- Local Municipal Support.

As noted, local municipal support will be critical. Therefore, delivery will have to be sensitive to the needs and concerns of the host communities and the municipal councils. Under the *Planning Act*, the local municipalities will play a significant role as the regulators of the planning processes that influence the location, timing and form of such development. As such, there is the possibility that the planning approvals process for any, or all, affordable housing developments will become the focus of controversy.

In order to minimize the potential for contention in the approval process there needs to be a set of principles guiding the delivery of the program. The principles should form the basis for a protocol or understanding which would govern the actions and decisions of the Regional housing authority and its relations with the local communities and municipal councils.

The following principles are put forward for consideration.

c) Principles to Guide the Implementation of the York Region Housing Supply Strategy

1. Part of a Fair and Equitable Region-wide Strategy

Such housing should be provided on the basis of an overall strategy for York Region, which is acceptable to the local municipalities, which ensures that there is a fair and equitable distribution of such housing among all the York Region Municipalities and among City of Vaughan Communities; .../4

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2. Co-operation, Consultation and Collaboration

There will need to be a working relationship with the Region of York which is co-operative, consultative and collaborative; and the nature and structure of this partnership and the delivery model will need to be defined and agreed to by the respective Councils;

3. Consistent With the Objectives and Policies of the Local Official Plan

Such housing shall be consistent with the objectives of the local official plans in respect of urban structure, design and economic and business objectives;

4. Local Needs are a Priority

First priority should be given to meeting the needs of local communities in respect of the provision of non-profit or co-op housing (e.g. locally based sponsorship preferred), seniors and workforce requirements;

5. Providers Must be Responsible and Accountable

Housing providers shall demonstrate a clear history of responsibility and accountability with a successful track record in building and site management and tenant and community relations;

6. High Quality, Contextual Urban Design and Architecture

Design of such housing shall be contextual, respecting and enhancing the character of the immediate area and respecting the scale, height, massing and intensity of the built form and architectural style of the surrounding community;

7. Community Integration

Such housing shall be provided in a socially responsible manner, being dispersed and integrated into the community, without concentration, either by building or by area;

8. Services Must Be Available

Such housing shall only be permitted where services are immediately available or where their provision is imminent. Services includes transit, schools, community centres, libraries etc.;

9. Financial Relief May Be Considered

The City may wish to consider relief from its Development Charges on a case-by-case basis, subject to the development of evaluation criteria, which would include adherence to the set of adopted principles. It is noted that relief from Development Charges would have to be replaced from another source of funds. The Region of York, in offering relief from its Development Charges, is proposing to replace the DC's with money from its Social Housing Reserve Fund.

10. Financial Relief Considered Only if Other Partners Available

Relief from development charges would only be granted where such charges, or other funding, have also been waived or received from the Region of York or other level of government. City participation could be subject to any necessary conditions, which may include special considerations relating to design, beyond the purview of the *Planning Act*.

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d) Options

Ultimately, Council will have to determine the role it wants to play in the provision of social housing in the City of Vaughan. A number of options are available. In the first instance, the City could play a largely passive role and rely on the oversight offered by the City's representatives on Regional Council and the influence on development approvals that the local councils have through the *Planning Act*.

A more activist stance presents a range of opportunities. This could involve a closer working relationship with the Region of York in the delivery of housing. Measures may include developing formal liaison committees or working groups with the Region, to guide the delivery of social housing in the City; giving priority treatment to the processing of planning applications for affordable housing; playing an advocacy role in supporting the housing initiatives of local organizations; and potentially providing financial assistance for social housing through the waiving of Development Charges and application fees.

Staff is of the opinion that it is premature for the City to take a position on its role at this time. More needs to be learned about the York Region Housing Supply Strategy, particularly on the delivery model the Region is proposing to implement and its guiding principles. A set of principles identifying local concerns has been set out above, which can form the basis for further discussion with the Region. Once there is more information on the overall strategy and the Region's reaction to the suggested principles, there will be a better basis for Council to decide on the role the City of Vaughan might play in the delivery of affordable housing.

Conclusion

There is clearly a need for more social and affordable housing in York Region. With the prospect that more money will be available from the senior levels of government, there is a much greater chance that new social housing will be developed, over the next few years. In response the Region is in the process of preparing its Housing Supply Strategy. Of particular concern to the local municipalities will be how the housing programs are implemented and the resulting impacts on their communities.

This report recommends that further discussions take place with the Region, focusing on how the housing programs will be delivered. It is suggested that the implementation principles set out above form the basis for these discussions. Once Council has a better idea of the more detailed content of the Strategy and the Region's response to the implementation principles, it will be possible for Council to refine the City's role in the provision of social and affordable housing.

Should Council concur with this approach, then the recommendation set out in the "Recommendation" section of this report should be adopted.

Attachments

1. "Status Report: Proposed Regional Housing Supply Strategy, Regional Municipality of York", Item 2, Report No. 16, Committee of Whole (Working Session) – February 25, 2002

Report prepared by:

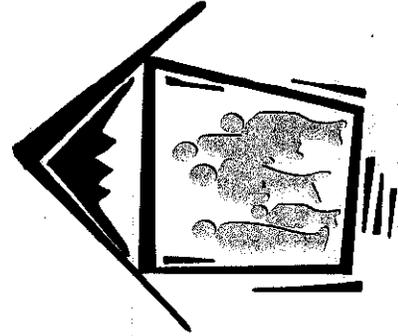
Roy McQuillin, Senior Planner, ext. 8211

/CM

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)



Housing Supply STRATEGY



Regional Chair's Message

York Region is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. As our communities become more urban and populous, our challenge as a Regional government is to help ensure that the housing needs of all our residents - youth, seniors, single persons, couples and households with special needs - are met.

We recognize the immediate need to partner with others to achieve our goals, including the building industry, government, our area municipalities and taxpayers.

York Region is committed to ensuring that our housing investments enhance the private rental market, as well as meet the needs of households on the social housing waiting list.

Thank you for your input on this document. Together we will create made-in-York solutions that include high quality, integrated housing options to complement our quality of life.

Yours truly,

Bill Finch
Regional Chair & CEO

Challenges and Issues

The development of new rental housing in the Region has been at a virtual standstill since 1995, when the provincial government withdrew its support for social housing development. The private sector has been unable to create new affordable rental housing on its own. Affordable ownership housing has been out of reach for many young families, entry level professionals and human services workers.

- Currently, York Region has a rental vacancy rate of 0.7%.
- Little new rental housing is being built in the Region.
- Changing demographics include a growing senior population, rapid urbanization and rising population.
- Waiting list for Social Housing is 4,800 households.
- 25% of the Region's homeowner households pay over 30% of income on housing.
- 40% of the Region's renter households pay over 30% of income on housing.
- Increasing pressure on emergency shelters.
- Changing face of homelessness, rise in youth and working families at risk.

This is an opportunity to address key housing areas: affordable ownership, rental and non-profit as well as the relationship of housing to transit, human services, our economy and growth management.

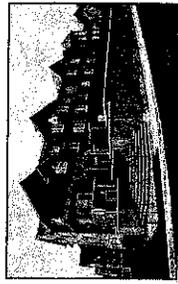


Why a Housing Strategy

The need for an increased supply of rental housing, affordable ownership and non-profit housing was first recognized in the Region a number of years ago. Today, many of the Region's major initiatives are linked to the housing supply issue. For example, the provision of a wide variety of housing is key to the Region's approach to growth management. Likewise, housing is very much related to the Region's Transit, Economic Development and Human Services Strategies.

Vision 2026 is a further example of a project that recognizes the integral role of housing in York Region's future.

As a Consolidated Municipal Service Manager, the Region is now responsible for Social Housing including the administration of 6,131 housing units. The public, area municipalities and other stakeholders have identified the need for affordable housing. In addition, the business community has told us that appropriate housing for a growing and diversifying workforce is not available. Regional Council has adopted this action-based housing strategy which will help to co-ordinate the efforts of all stakeholders.



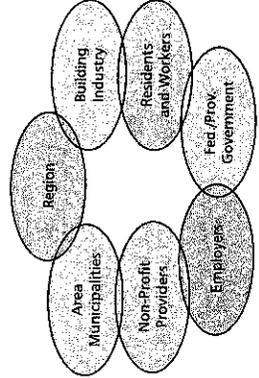
What was Heard

In developing this strategy the Region held a Forum and several focus groups, bringing together representatives from the building industry, area municipalities, non-profits and the provincial and federal governments. This is a summary of what was heard:

- York Region needs to play a leadership role in the provision of housing.
- Integration of housing into our communities and location close to transit, human services and employment is key.
- Our most vulnerable households will continue to need rent subsidies in order to afford suitable housing.
- Collaboration and innovation are required between the Region, Area Municipalities, Provincial and Federal Governments, Non-Profit Providers, Building Industry, Employers and the Community.
- Continued economic vitality is dependent on affordable housing.
- An effective community education and acceptance campaign is needed to support the development of affordable housing.
- Now is the time for action.

Housing Partners

The involvement of many partners is essential to the success of the Housing Supply Strategy. A balance must be found between policy initiatives and investment in order to create more opportunities for ownership, rental and non-profit housing. The range of housing choices available to our residents is increasingly important to the economic health and vitality of our communities.



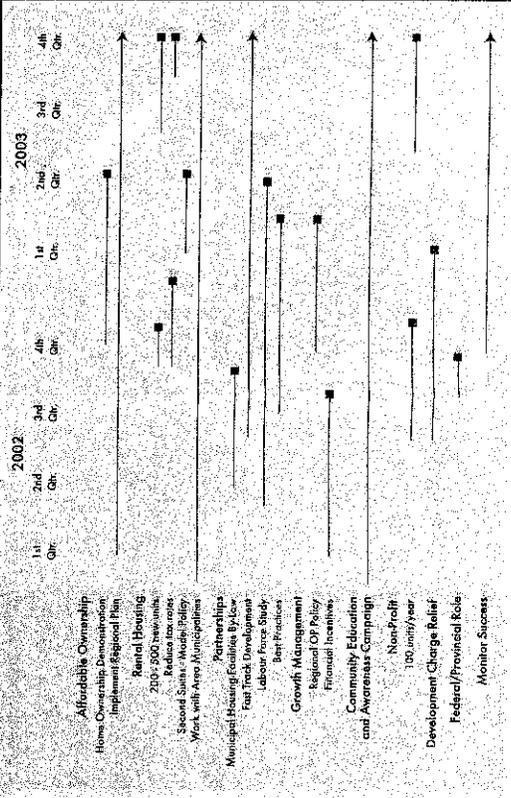
What We are Doing Already

York Region is taking a leadership role in housing. Some of the York Region initiatives that are complete or underway include:

- Designated Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for Homelessness and Housing - 1998.
- Produced Homelessness Task Force Report - 2000.
- Produced the York Region Housing Directions Report 2000.
- Produced York Region Special Needs Housing Report 2000.
- Produced Community Plan to address Homelessness - 2001.
- Owns and manages 1,695 housing units.
- Administers 6,131 affordable housing units.
- Lowered tax rates for multi-residential units.
- Supported the establishment of a Habitat for Humanity affiliate in York Region.
- Launching labour force strategy to housing issues.
- Regional Council adopted the Housing Supply Strategy in June 2002.

Clearly more needs to be done and the Region is committed to co-ordinating an action plan.

Timetable



Next Steps

This Housing Supply Strategy identifies a number of action areas. The Strategy focuses on practical steps that can be taken together with our community partners to increase housing choices for our citizens.

Affordable housing delivery must be co-ordinated with the Region's Growth Management Strategy, Transportation Master Plan and changing urban structure. Critical to the success of this strategy is the support of the community and the development of new partnerships to create affordable housing.

To keep informed about our progress, please visit our website www.region.york.on.ca.



Affordable Ownership

The development industry in York Region has built 80,000 new units in the last 10 years. These units provide increasing choice in housing types and affordability. However, to purchase a basic townhouse or condominium in York Region requires an annual income of approximately \$40,000. Over one-third of our households can not afford to purchase a home without some assistance. A range of actions is required to provide more opportunities for home ownership.

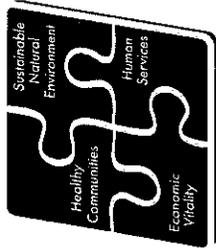
- 1. Regularly implement Regional Official Plan policies, in particular housing mix, compact communities and intensification of centres and corridors.
- 2. Pursue program options to facilitate the transition from rental to affordable ownership for modest income households.
- 3. Support building industry to develop innovative affordable housing.
- 4. Promote inclusion of second suites in new homes to assist new homebuyers and to create new affordable rental units.
- 5. Strongly discourage down zoning of sites in areas with medium and high density designations.



Rental Housing

The Region has an acute shortage of rental housing units. Only 587 rental units have been produced since 1995. The vacancy rate for rental units is 0.7%. Rental housing is often the first housing unit for most of us and provides appropriate housing for several stages of life.

- 1. Enact a Municipal Housing Facilities By-law to enable the Region to provide incentives to the private sector to help create affordable rental housing.
- 2. Provide 200-500 new rental housing units through a private-public sector partnership pilot program.
- 3. Encourage area municipalities and school boards to reduce fees and charges to support affordable rental housing.
- 4. Promote alternative development standards to encourage affordable rental housing (i.e. reduced parking standards).



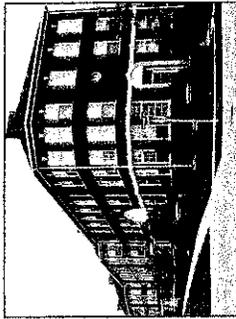
- 5. Encourage area municipalities to allow rooming houses, boarding and lodging homes in their communities.
- 6. Encourage area municipalities to allow group homes for those with special needs.
- 7. Facilitate the expansion of emergency shelter beds in the Region.
- 8. Work with "at risk youth" to develop a transitional housing project.



Partnerships

An effective housing strategy requires the involvement of all private sector, public sector and non-profit partners. The health of our communities and the strength of our economy depends on these partnerships.

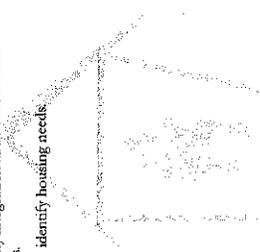
- 1. Establish a case management team to expedite the approval of affordable housing projects.
- 2. Work with municipalities to "streamline" affordable housing development in their communities.
- 3. Develop and implement a partnership program to support the private sector in developing affordable rental housing.
- 4. Create a best practices working group with area municipalities to share ideas, successes and challenges in developing affordable housing.
- 5. Through a partnership with Human Resources Development Canada, study the housing needs of our labour force to ensure continued economic vitality in our communities.
- 6. Local municipalities will be asked to become full partners by endorsing the Housing Supply Strategy.
- 7. Encourage financial institutions to develop innovative funding sources for affordable housing such as the use of pension funds.
- 8. Work closely with the area municipalities to co-ordinate the implementation of the Housing Supply Strategy.



Community Education and Awareness Campaign

In the past, York Region was primarily a series of bedroom communities made up of mostly single family residences. Today, York Region is increasingly diverse in terms of family type, household income and age. Providing a range of housing choices for our labour force, young adults and seniors is essential.

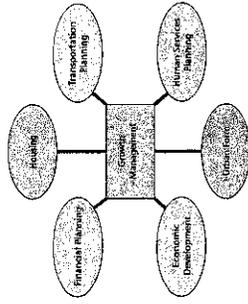
- 1. Develop an education and awareness campaign to promote community understanding of the housing needs of York Region's residents and labour force.
- 2. Create a Housing Fact Sheet to provide basic information about housing in York Region.
- 3. Work with area municipalities to identify "Made-in-York" affordable housing success stories that demonstrate high quality design, community integration and intensification of centres and corridors.
- 4. Work with employers to identify housing needs.



Growth Management

Housing is a key component of the Region's growth management strategy. It is important to recognize the relationship between housing, economic vitality, transportation and quality of life. The Region will lead by ensuring that investments in housing, transit and human services support and enhance our planned urban structure.

- 1. Co-ordinate planning for housing, transit and economic development and human services.
- 2. Refine the Regional Official Plan to ensure that it reflects the policies and direction of the Housing Supply Strategy.
- 3. Complete a study on financial incentives including development charges to encourage higher density residential development in centres and corridors.
- 4. Implement the Region's Transit Strategy.



Monitoring Success

It is important to update Regional Council, the community, and all those who participated in the development of this Housing Supply Strategy on the progress that is made.

- 1. The Region will produce an Annual Report on Housing, reporting on the action items that have been completed, those that require further work and information about housing production in the Region. Successes and challenges in reaching housing targets will be highlighted.
- 2. The Region will develop and implement mechanisms to track public opinion and concerns with respect to the quality and quantity of housing options in the community.
- 3. The Region will regularly re-examine the Housing Supply Strategy, incorporating new and innovative ideas, partnerships and tools to provide a wide range of affordable housing options, as well as to better match housing to the labour force, transit and our urban structure.



ACTION AREAS

80,000 new units in the last 10 years. These units provide increasing choice in housing types and affordability. However, to purchase a basic townhouse or condominium in York Region requires an annual income of approximately \$40,000. Over one-third of our households can not afford to purchase a home without some assistance. A range of actions is required to provide more opportunities for home ownership.

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