

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Directors of Housing York Inc. Board

From: Kathy Milsom, General Manager

Date: April 21, 2020

Re: Housing York Inc. Activity Update

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### **Business as usual in unusual times**

On April 4, the Ontario government reconfirmed that the maintenance, repair and property management of residential properties and buildings are essential services. As a responsible and caring landlord, Housing York Inc. (HYI) has made a number of operational changes to protect employees and residents while continuing to provide essential services.

Highlights of actions taken to date include:

- Closure of playgrounds, resident common rooms and, in some cases, removal of furniture from other common areas as needed to discourage residents from congregating
- Closure of management offices to the public
- Implementation of remote work arrangements for office-based employees, enabling resident service continuity through phone and email connections
- Deferral of all non-urgent in-suite work and most capital work
- Provision of appropriate personal protective equipment and training to support employees completing urgent work in residents' homes
- Implementation of resident and contractor screening processes for urgent in-suite work
- Enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces in common areas
- Extensive resident communications, including dissemination of Public Health information and door-to-door delivery of information about financial assistance programs

## **Buildings are being well maintained**

HYI continues to ensure that buildings are well maintained. Maintenance team members are active at all HYI properties, with responsibilities including enhanced cleaning, building system maintenance, fire safety compliance, urgent in-suite repairs, garbage and recycling removal, and preparation of vacated units for new residents. The team is also providing support to residents, delivering information door-to-door, posting public health notices and reminding residents they encounter to practice physical distancing. After hours emergency maintenance services continue, with added precautions to screen contractors and residents if work is required in a resident's home.

## **Leasing activity continues**

Recognizing that the need for affordable housing has never been greater, HYI continues to lease available units. The process is slower than usual, as the activity does not begin until the unit is vacant. Showings are coordinated virtually and documents are exchanged electronically. Applicants who decide not to accept a unit through this process will not have the opportunity counted as a refusal for waiting list purposes. Adaptations have also been made to ensure physical distancing throughout the process. For example, new residents receive their keys by accessing a lockbox rather than directly from a resident services team member. HYI welcomed 56 new resident households in March. Of these, 44 were at Woodbridge Lane, bringing the building's total occupancy to 66%.

## **Housing York Inc. is working with residents experiencing COVID-19 related income losses**

HYI delivered a communication regarding rent payment to all residents at the end of March. The communication provided information about the available income support programs and advised all residents with a COVID-19 related income loss to apply for assistance. Residents were encouraged to contact HYI if they were unable to pay their April rent in full.

By mid-April, 45 market rent households had contacted HYI to advise that they had experienced a reduction in hours of work or been laid off. HYI encouraged these households to pay what they could towards their rent while they apply for income supports. HYI is working with market rent households on a case-by-case basis to establish manageable payment plans as needed and will advise them of any new benefit programs as the situation evolves.

Approximately 80% of HYI resident households pay a rent that is based on their income. Many of these households are seniors, people receiving disability benefits or participants in Ontario Works who have guaranteed incomes unaffected by COVID-19. Up to mid-April, 30 subsidized households had requested income-loss related rent adjustments. HYI is working with these households to ensure the necessary information is received to enable the recalculation of rent to be processed as quickly as possible.

## Residents and community groups connecting with each other during COVID-19

HYI residents are taking precautions to stay at home in an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19. For many vulnerable residents, including seniors, this can increase isolation when they are not as socially and physically active outside their homes. HYI team members are responding to resident calls and emails, and maintenance staff is interacting with residents while maintaining physical distance. There have also been examples of giving and caring within HYI communities, as summarized below.

### Angels for COVID Relief delivery at Rose Town, in the City of Richmond Hill

In March, a large donation from Angels for COVID Relief, a grassroots community group, provided each household at Rose Town, a 125-unit seniors' apartment building in the City of Richmond Hill, with food, toilet paper, paper towels, a hand written note and a card with a number to call for help (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**Angels for COVID Relief Information Provided to Rose Town Residents**



Angels for COVID Relief describe themselves as a grassroots community of angel volunteers ready to help anyone in need in the Greater Toronto Area in this time of uncertainty.

### Changes to Food Market at Lakeside Residences during COVID-19

The Food Bank of York Region (formerly called LifeCorps Food Share) which is funded by York Region through the Community Investment Fund, collects and delivers food for community food pantries, agencies and community housing residents. Lakeside Residences, a 97-unit apartment building for families and seniors in the Town of Georgina, participates in the program.

The program is normally set up as a “shopping” type experience in the building lounge to provide residents with food options. With COVID-19, the Food Bank of York Region has adapted to maintain physical distancing at every stage of their process. Volunteers from the building are assisting in coordinated door-to-door delivery service for the 30 residents who rely on the program.

## **Housing development updates**

### **Stouffville Affordable Housing Development, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville – planning application work continues**

Since the site plan application was submitted to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in December, the Region and its consultants have been working collaboratively with the Town towards site plan approval. Site plan approval is anticipated to occur in the summer. Several planned public consultation efforts have been placed on hold, but community comments received are being reviewed and addressed. The former owners had been leasing the space for storage purposes but have now fully vacated the site. A building permit to allow demolition of the existing structures on site has been issued by the Town, and this work is anticipated to be completed during the summer.

### **Unionville Seniors Affordable Housing Development, City of Markham – construction work continues**

The list of essential services released by the Province of Ontario on April 3 includes residential projects where appropriate permits have already been issued, or the project involves renovations to residential properties and construction work started before April 4, 2020. The Unionville Affordable Housing Development falls into this category, and can continue as an essential service.

Construction work on the site is progressing. Site servicing is underway, including the installation of sewers and watermains through the driveway next to the Unionville Home Society. Drilling and excavation work will progress over the next few months, after which the contractor will undertake further foundation work.

As always, health and safety remains top priority. The contractor has indicated that they are taking extraordinary precautions during this time. This includes limiting site access to only those required to be there, daily screening of staff for symptoms, practicing social distancing and enhanced cleaning of work areas. Trades and workers are willing and able to continue working in a safe manner.

### **Mapleglen Residences, City of Vaughan – roof replacement**

Construction to replace components of the roof at Mapleglen Residences in the City of Vaughan was completed in March 2020. This work was required as specific areas of the roof were experiencing water penetration. The work involved the removal of existing roofing material, including wet insulation. The new roof construction consisted of new insulation and a two-ply membrane application. Parapet replacement and new metal flashing completed the project.

### **Tom Taylor Place, Town of Newmarket - natural gas standby generator installation**

Construction to install a new natural gas generator was completed in March 2020. The generator is installed to supply power to the building during a main power supply interruption. The generator is installed in such a way that it will not only provide backup power for critical components such as elevators and heating, but will provide power to the entire building. The scope of work for this project also included a building power factor adjustment and the installation of a power surge protection device. The surge protector will guard all critical electrical building equipment from unexpected power surges from the main power supply to the building.

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