



Report of the General Manager

Building Better Together: Housing York Inc.'s 2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan

Recommendation

The Board of Directors approve the 2021 to 2024 Housing York Inc. Strategic Plan (Attachment 1).

Summary

This report seeks Board approval of the Housing York Inc. (HYI) 2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan. The current HYI plan, [*Achieving New Heights through Innovation and Sustainability*](#), concludes in 2020.

Key points:

- As the Region's housing corporation, HYI has an important role in supporting York Region's housing and homelessness goals.
- The 2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan builds on HYI's successes achieved under the current plan, while seeking innovative and ambitious approaches to help address housing challenges faced by HYI and the Region, such as limited affordable housing supply.
- Partnerships with the Region's local cities, townships and towns, as well as the private and non-profit sectors, will allow HYI to increase affordable housing options beyond the normal rate of growth.

Background

Housing York Inc. provides affordable housing to over 4,500 residents

HYI owns and operates 36 housing sites with 2,762 units distributed through all nine local municipalities, and five emergency and transitional housing facilities. HYI manages building operations, ensures properties are well-maintained and financially sustainable, supports successful tenancies and promotes resident engagement with the vision of building communities that everyone would be proud to call home. Safe, secure and affordable housing is a key social determinant of health, and HYI's success is essential to ensuring the health and wellbeing of its residents.

The 2017 to 2020 Plan supported Housing York Inc. to increase the supply of affordable housing and ensure properties and finances are managed effectively

In [November 2016](#), the HYI Board approved the 2017 to 2020 Plan, with five strategic directions:

1. Strengthen community health
2. Build long-term financial sustainability
3. Effectively manage assets
4. Provide good governance and strengthen organizational capacity
5. Inform and implement Regional housing initiatives

HYI has achieved success under each of these five strategic directions. Highlights include:

- Opened Woodbridge Lane, a 162-unit affordable rental housing development in the City of Vaughan
- Completed over 300 capital projects, including roof replacements, generators, lighting upgrades, parking lot replacements and building envelope enhancements
- Developed a portfolio management strategy to support informed decision-making regarding the future of HYI buildings
- Established HYI's new vision statement of building inclusive communities that everyone would be proud to call home as a leader in affordable housing, and HYI's new mission statement of working with residents and partners to deliver housing programs and services that are important to our communities as a responsible and caring landlord
- Completed a resident survey in 2019 to better understand and respond to residents' diverse needs
- Developed a Resident Inclusion Plan to support welcoming and inclusive communities

Housing York Inc. has an important role in helping the Region achieve its goals for the housing and homelessness system

As the Region's housing corporation and largest of 45 community housing providers, HYI has an important role in helping address the Region's increasingly complex housing challenges. In [October 2019](#), Council approved an updated 10-year housing and homelessness plan, [Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone](#), to respond to Region-wide issues of housing supply, housing stability and sustainability of the housing system. The plan focuses on three goals:

1. Increasing the supply of affordable and rental housing
2. Helping people find and keep housing
3. Strengthening the housing and homelessness system

In York Region, home ownership costs continue to rise and a limited rental market impacts residents' ability to find housing that meets their needs at a price they can afford. York Region had a low vacancy rate of 1.2% in 2019, while the average resale price for all housing types rose above \$940,000.

The supply of affordable housing is not well-matched to the current and forecasted needs of York Region residents. As a result, demand for subsidized housing continues to grow. Since 2010, York Region's subsidized housing wait list more than doubled in size. By the end of 2019, the wait list had 17,457 households, an increase of 8% from 2018. Only 245 households were housed from the wait list across York Region in 2019, down from 301 in 2018. Of those housed in 2019, 125 households were housed within HYI's portfolio.

Changes in federal and provincial funding programs require new and innovative approaches to increase affordable housing options

Investment from senior levels of government is crucial to continue increasing new supply; however, current federal and provincial capital funding is either trending downward or is unknown. The Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation-Ontario Bilateral Agreement states funding to support regional needs related to social and affordable housing repair, construction and affordability supports tapers off by 2027 to 2028 in order to prioritize funding for the Canada Housing Benefit, which began in 2020. This means Service Managers may see a reduction in the types of dedicated federal/provincial capital programs that have been essential to enable HYI to expand its portfolio since the early 2000s.

On September 21, 2020, the federal government announced the \$1 billion Rapid Housing Initiative to help support Canada's economic recovery by rapidly creating new affordable housing. The initiative is intended to create up to 3,000 new affordable housing units across the country by funding the construction of modular housing, acquisition of land, and conversion of existing buildings to affordable housing. Although limited details are available about the program requirements and application process, HYI will work with the Region to assess opportunities to access this funding initiative.

While HYI welcomes new funding opportunities, stable, dedicated capital funding is needed on an ongoing basis in order to plan future developments and address York Region's housing needs. It is critical for HYI to also explore new and creative solutions to increase the supply of affordable housing options.

Analysis

The 2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan positions Housing York Inc. to innovatively respond to complex housing challenges related to limited affordable housing supply, while remaining resident-centric

As the magnitude of York Region's housing challenges continues to increase, HYI must do more to support residents in need of affordable housing options. As such, the 2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan (Attachment 1) reflects a commitment to growth, sustainability and innovation. To build on key accomplishments and respond to current needs and challenges, the plan includes new strategic priorities, goals and actions for the next four years. Feedback from residents and the Board of Directors helped ensure the plan reflects the needs of local communities. The findings from a 2019 HYI resident survey informed key actions and targets around building inclusive communities, and providing supports and services to residents. The Board was engaged through three workshops held throughout 2020 to confirm HYI's mission and vision, to inform strategic priorities, actions, key performance indicators and targets, and to review the draft plan. The plan's strategic priorities are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2
2021 to 2024 HYI Strategic Priorities



The strategic priorities guide HYI to explore new, ambitious ways of increasing the supply of affordable housing beyond the normal rate of growth, supporting residents’ diverse needs and ensuring financial sustainability. Each strategic priority has specific goals for the next four years, actions to deliver results, and key performance indicators and targets to measure success. Specific goals and examples of results to be achieved over the four-years of the plan are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1
2021 to 2024 HYI Goals and Examples of Results

Strategic Priority	Goals	Examples of Results
Priority 1: Expanded Housing Portfolio	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Portfolio expansion beyond the normal rate of growth Investment from other levels of government HYI residents impacted by redevelopment are supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double rate of growth (480 new units) Maintain \$28.6 million in federal/provincial funding Establish baseline and set improvement target from baseline
Priority 2: Inclusive Communities and Successful Tenancies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Communities are inclusive Residents are supported to have successful tenancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete accessibility inspections and implement enhancement plans in 36 buildings Preserve 97% of tenancies at risk for rent arrears
Priority 3: Financial Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Improved life-cycle value for HYI buildings Increased operational efficiencies New developments are operationally self-sustaining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet or exceed life expectancy of building components in 90% of buildings Improve resident satisfaction with elevators, outdoor green spaces and janitorial services Maintain a 70/30 subsidized/market split in new developments

Annual business plans and targets will be developed to operationalize the plan. Performance against the annual plans will be carefully managed and tracked to ensure success in delivering on the four-year commitments contained in the plan.

New and expanded partnerships are critical to ensuring Housing York Inc.'s continued success over the next four years

HYI cannot achieve the 2021 to 2024 goals on its own. Partnerships with the Region's cities, townships and towns, as well as the private and non-profit sectors can help support new development at an accelerated rate. This includes working with municipalities to advance the development of HYI housing in their communities through municipal fee concessions and identifying new lands available for development. HYI will also establish new public-private partnerships to raise capital and expand the housing portfolio. HYI will work with the Region to develop resources and offer support to non-profit organizations interested in affordable housing development, and continue to partner with support service organizations to help ensure HYI residents have successful tenancies.

Investments from senior levels of government are also crucial to help fund new development and ensure existing assets remain in a good state of repair now and in the future. HYI will continue to advocate to federal and provincial governments to fund new housing developments in order to reduce cost to the Region.

Financial Considerations

HYI's budget enables the corporation to implement strategic directions, manage increasing service demands, and maintain or enhance existing service levels. In order to implement commitments for the first year of the plan, HYI's 2021 Budget is presented to the Board for approval alongside the plan. Cost implications beyond 2021 will be presented to the Board for consideration as part of the annual budget process. In addition, a business case is planned in the 2021 Community and Health Services budget to support staffing resources required to implement commitments in this plan as part of the Regional budget process.

Availability of funds from senior levels of government might impact Housing York Inc.'s ability to advance development-related actions during the four years of this plan

Key actions related to expanding HYI's portfolio might be dependent on federal and provincial funding. HYI will continue to explore opportunities to leverage available funds in order to make progress under each strategic priority. This includes pursuing existing opportunities under the National Housing Strategy and new funding under the Rapid Housing Initiative to support commitments in the plan, such as the development of modular housing.

Local Impact

The plan identifies new and different ways to address demand for affordable housing options across all nine local municipalities. The plan also focuses on ensuring HYI residents have access to the right supports at the right time to support successful tenancies.

Local municipalities are critical partners in increasing the supply of affordable housing, and HYI will continue to work with the Region's cities, townships and towns to advance development at the local level so residents have access to appropriate housing at all ages and stages of their lives.

Conclusion

The Region and HYI have been successful in maintaining existing affordable housing in a good state of repair, increasing the supply of community housing and supporting the diverse needs of residents; however, more needs to be done to help address the Region's growing housing challenges. HYI's 2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan focuses on expanding the housing portfolio, promoting inclusive communities and successful tenancies, and ensuring financial sustainability.

The plan includes new, innovative and ambitious ideas to help accelerate the goals and objectives of the Board of Directors.

The plan aligns with the Region's 2019 to 2023 Corporate Strategic Plan to deliver and promote affordable housing as well as the Region's 10-year housing and homelessness plan. The strategic priorities, goals and actions will advance HYI towards achieving its vision of building communities that everyone would be proud to call home, and its mission of working with residents and partners to deliver services that are important to communities as a responsible and caring landlord.

For more information on this report, please contact Kathy Milsom, General Manager, Housing York Inc. at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72091. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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