

MEMORANDUM

To: Directors of Housing York Inc. Board
From: Kathy Milsom, General Manager
Date: March 25, 2021
Re: Housing York Inc. Activity Update

2021 Housing York Inc. Business Plan, first quarter update

Included with this update as Attachment 1 is the quarterly update of performance against the 2021 Housing York Inc. (HYI) business plan. In summary:

- Over half of the actions identified in the business plan have been initiated. All actions that have been initiated are currently on track to meet 2021 targets.
- **Highlights for Strategic Priority 1: Expanded Housing Portfolio include:**
 - Discussions with potential partners such as York Regional Rapid Transit Corporation and local municipalities to explore opportunities for development to expand the HYI portfolio have begun.
 - Intensification of existing HYI sites is underway, as the Board approved HYI sites for new transitional housing (16 prefabricated units on the Leeder/Porter Place site and eight on the Sutton Youth site), as well as potential sites for affordable housing (Nobleview, Orchard Heights and/or Brayfield Manor). Affordable housing sites were included in the Region's application to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Rapid Housing Initiative to leverage available federal funding. Unfortunately, none of these projects were approved, but there is potential for consideration if additional funding is made available.
 - Negotiations for municipal fee concessions to advance affordable housing initiatives are on track. Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council approved a reduction of parkland fees, and Regional Council approved a request to all local municipalities to exempt HYI from parkland fees.

- **Highlights for Strategic Priority 2: Inclusive Communities and Successful Tenancies include:**
 - Evaluating success of new initiatives, processes and services through a resident survey is underway, as a request for proposal is in development to procure survey services.
 - Residents are being supported to have successful tenancies, as payment plan options and supports have been offered to households in arrears.
 - Understanding HYI arrears in comparison to large community housing provider benchmarks is underway, as HYI is partnering with Housing Partnership Canada and a network of large Ontario providers to develop key performance indicators.

- **Highlights for Strategic Priority 3: Financial Sustainability include:**
 - Business processes to manage procurement electronically are underway, as maintenance request-based invoices can now be processed electronically and the approach for contract-based invoices is under development.
 - Implementation of the preventative maintenance module and test components is in progress to support reduction in life-cycle cost (capital, operating and maintenance).
 - Energy and Utilities Management Plan commitments are on track, and a request for proposals is under development to be released in the second quarter.

Community Paramedicine clinics resume at Heritage East and Founders Place, in the Town of Newmarket

Community Paramedicine is a drop-in community-based health promotion program for seniors in HYI buildings with a high volume of 911 calls. The program helps seniors with disease prevention, health management and promotion.

The program was temporarily suspended due to COVID-19 pressures but has now resumed in two Newmarket communities, Heritage East and Founders Place. Although HYI common rooms remain closed to general use, HYI continues to work with Regional partners to safely provide programs that support resident health. The Community Paramedicine team provides services through scheduled appointments and with appropriate COVID-19 precautions.

Housing York Inc. delivers COVID-19 vaccination information to residents

Public Health has launched the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out for people aged 80 years and older. Although there is variation between seniors' buildings, approximately 32% of residents in HYI seniors' buildings are in this age group. In buildings with mixed populations, such as the Richmond Hill Hub in the City of Richmond Hill, and Lakeside Residences in the Town of

Georgina, residents over the age of 80 account for approximately 6% of residents. HYI team members participated in Public Health COVID-19 vaccine planning discussions and contributed demographic information about HYI residents.

In view of HYI resident preferences, paper notices were distributed door-to-door to share Public Health messaging about the vaccine program. HYI continues to support vaccine communications by:

- Posting updated Public Health information in common areas of the buildings
- Directing HYI residents' vaccine inquiries to Access York
- Periodically distributing door-to-door notices, with the next delivery planned to share information about the provincial vaccine appointment booking system once that process is publicly communicated

HYI has also offered to facilitate on-site vaccination clinics in future should Public Health determine that building-specific clinics can be efficiently resourced.

Residents informed of provincial Rent Geared to Income simplification coming into effect July 2021

In March, HYI delivered notices to inform residents of changes to the provincially regulated Rent Geared to Income (RGI) subsidy rules. The existing program requires extensive documentation of all current income with the resident required to report all income changes within 30 days. This RGI process is difficult for some residents to navigate. Effective July 2021, the Region will be implementing the new simplified provincial program, which shifts the program to an annual RGI calculation based on the household's income tax returns. Under this program, mid-year rent adjustments will only be made if the household has experienced a significant loss of income.

In addition to RGI, HYI administers Rent Assistance, a Regionally designed program launched in 2010 to provide rent subsidies to residents in new buildings. Rent Assistance has been based on the household's income tax returns with provisions similar to the new RGI rules for mid-year adjustments. Although the RGI program continues to be more complex than Rent Assistance, the improved alignment between programs will allow HYI to simplify some business processes, including the process to transfer residents between buildings, when needed.

Although RGI changes won't take effect until July, HYI has provided information to residents to remind them of the importance of submitting their income tax returns to the Canada Revenue Agency. The notices also provided information on virtual tax clinics to assist residents with filing income tax returns.

Housing York Inc. engaged residents in communities with potential intensification projects

The review of applications for funding through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Rapid Housing Initiative, reported to the HYI Board in [February 2020](#), were completed in March. The applications included intensification at the following HYI properties:

- Orchard Heights in the Town of Aurora – eight proposed units for seniors
- Brayfield Manor in the Town of Newmarket – 20 proposed units for families, individuals, and seniors
- Nobleview Pines in the Township of King – 20 proposed units for seniors

The Rapid Housing Initiative garnered significant interest from the sector, which resulted in the Projects Stream receiving 679 applications with total funding requested exceeding \$4 billion. Of the total applications, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation confirmed 179 projects for funding as part of its current spending authority. Unfortunately, none of the Region's applications were approved for funding.

Given the demand, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is seeking additional funding to support more projects under the Rapid Housing Initiative and are keeping unsuccessful applications on file for future consideration, should additional funding be made available.

In hopes of a more favourable response, and since Regional and HYI Board approvals for the funding requests were public information, HYI took steps to ensure that residents in the potentially affected communities were directly informed of the funding application and afforded opportunities to ask questions.

Residents in each property received notices providing a high-level overview of the potential intensification along with an invitation to a virtual information session. Residents also had the option to participate by telephone. Interested residents in the seniors' communities predominately participated by telephone, with greater use of the video conferencing option at the family community meeting.

The HYI team emphasized that funding had not been confirmed and that residents would be informed once HYI learns whether the funding is approved. Residents were assured that if the project proceeded, they would have opportunities to ask further questions and identify concerns. Residents expressed appreciation for the information and no significant concerns were raised. These initial meetings support the [HYI Strategic Plan](#) commitment to develop and implement a resident consultation and engagement process to inform planning for community redevelopment. Further communication will be undertaken to update residents regarding the current status of the applications.

Discontinuing bulk cable program

Two HYI properties, Orchard Heights in the Town of Aurora and Thornhill Green in the City of Markham, had bulk cable arrangements with HYI contracting directly with the service provider and paying for cable service. All residents in these communities were provided with cable service and required to pay a monthly cable charge, \$40 per month at Orchard Heights and \$45 per month at Thornhill Green, as part of their lease agreement. Residents were not able to opt out of the program.

As reported to the Board of Directors on [March 4, 2020](#), in the General Manager's Activity Update, shortly before the pandemic, HYI planned to engage residents to determine if they wanted to continue with bulk cable services. HYI intended to discontinue the bulk cable contract if the majority of residents supported that approach. Due to the pandemic, there was no opportunity to bring residents together to discuss options. Rogers was unwilling to do a shorter term contract to allow for post-COVID discussion, insisting on a five-year contract. It was understood anecdotally that most residents did not wish to continue with the contract in view of the many other options now available. In this context, the most practical approach was to allow the contract with Rogers to expire and provide support to residents through the transition.

Residents have been informed that the bulk cable program ended on March 31, 2021, and cable charges were removed from their rental payments effective April 1, 2021. HYI is working with the cable company to coordinate equipment return to minimize the inconvenience to residents. Although HYI received some complaints from residents who were happy with the bulk cable arrangements, the overall response has been positive.

Housing development updates

Unionville Commons, City of Markham – ongoing construction work

Martinway Developments Limited, the general contractor for this project, continues to progress with work on the ground floor and parking garage roof area. Building foundations and foundation walls, including waterproofing, have been completed. Construction of elevator shaft and columns at the lower levels P1 and P2 have been completed. All site services have been installed through foundation walls. The construction of the slab on grade for the lower parking level P2 and construction of suspended slab at level P1 have been completed. Precast stairs have been installed up to the ground floor. Construction of the ground floor slab and garage roof slab is over 90% complete. Ground floor column construction is underway.

At a meeting with the Community Liaison Committee held on February 10, 2021, members were provided with an update on the construction project as well as the planned development by Minto which is adjacent to the site. Committee members had questions about construction progress; however, most of the interest was on the future Minto development.

Stouffville Affordable Housing Development, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville – architectural and engineering work has begun


Demolition of all the existing commercial structures on the site is complete. Utilities that are on or run through the property have been disconnected. Fencing around the property has been installed to secure the proposed construction area. Architectural and engineering consulting services have begun with TCA/Thier + Curran Architects Inc. Meetings with the technical teams has begun to prepare the detailed design and the construction tender package, with the construction tender expected to close in the summer.

Transitional Housing, Town of Georgina – minor variance approved

On March 17th, the province announced capital funding for the transitional housing in the Town of Georgina through the Social Services Relief Fund – Phase Two. The following day, a public information centre was held with approximately 30 attendees. Attendees had questions and comments regarding the program as well as the building design, with overall support for the project. Design for the site is progressing, and the Town of Georgina approved the minor variance application for the project. On-site construction is expected to begin in late spring.

Transitional Housing, Town of East Gwillimbury – design of the facility is underway

On March 17th, the province announced the funding for the transitional housing in the Town of East Gwillimbury through the Social Services Relief Fund. On March 23, East Gwillimbury Council received a presentation on the proposed facility and the development was well supported. A public information centre is planned for mid-April. Design of the site has begun, with on-site construction to begin in the summer.



Kathy Milsom
General Manager

Attachment (1)
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