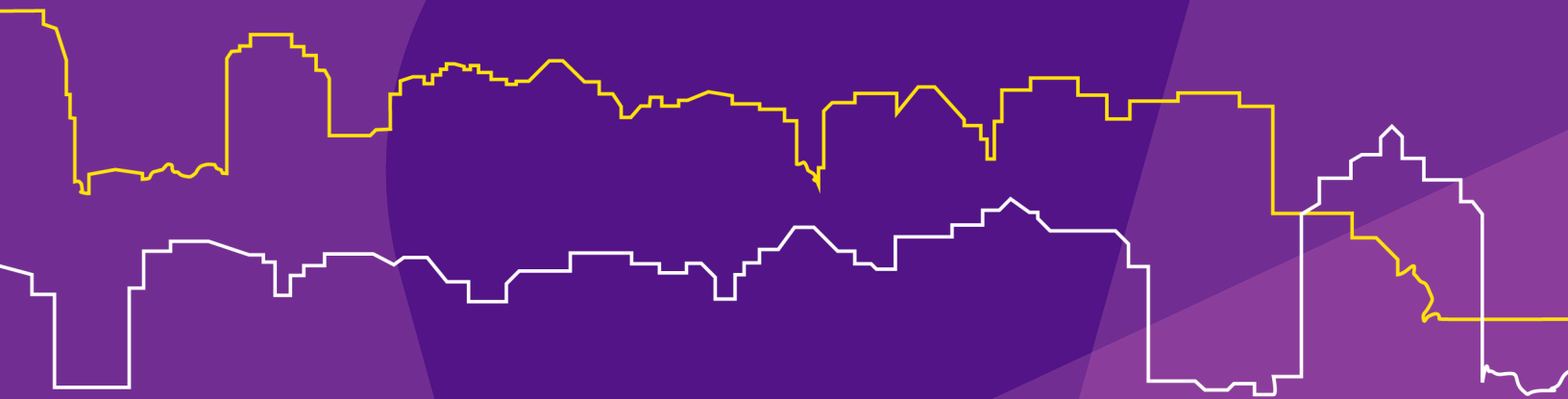


AFFORDABLE
HOUSING
in YORK REGION
2020 MEASURING and MONITORING



JUNE 2021

TABLE of CONTENTS

HOUSING IS A CORNERSTONE FOR BUILDING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES IN YORK REGION	3
York Region monitors the affordability of new housing units each year to determine if York Region Official Plan affordability targets are met	3
Maximum affordable housing thresholds are calculated annually for rental and ownership tenures	3
Figure 1: York Region Household Income Distribution and Affordable Ownership Thresholds, 2020	4
2020 LOCAL MAXIMUM AFFORDABLE HOUSING THRESHOLDS	4
Table 1: 2020 Affordable Ownership Thresholds	4
YORK REGION'S HOUSING AFFORDABILITY TARGETS	5
Table 2: New Affordable Housing Monitoring Analysis, 2020	5
IN 2020, THE TREND OF FEW AFFORDABLE UNITS MONITORED CONTINUES	6
Figure 2: New Units below York Region's Affordable Threshold, 2013 to 2020	6
PURPOSE BUILT RENTAL HOUSING HAS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS	7
THERE ARE FEWER AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS WHEN LOWER HOUSEHOLD INCOMES ARE CONSIDERED	7
Table 3: New Affordable Ownership Housing Supplemental Monitoring Analysis, 2020	8
FOR THE SECOND YEAR, OWNERSHIP HOUSING AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES ARE CONFIRMED FOR HIGHER INCOME HOUSEHOLDS	8
Table 4: Affordable Ownership Units for Households in the Upper Income Deciles, 2020	9
A LIMITED SUPPLY OF RENTAL OPTIONS EXIST IN THE PRIMARY RENTAL MARKET	9
Regional rental thresholds in 2020 range from \$1,244 to \$2,179 based on the provincial definition	9
Table 5: 2020 Percent Average Market Rents by Bedroom Type	10
THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK CONTINUES TO PROVIDE LIMITED AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS	11
Table 6: Affordable Units for Households in the Upper Income Deciles, 2020	11
Figure 3: Average Resale House Prices Compared to Measuring & Monitoring Years, 2013-2020	12
THE REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATE WILL HELP TO BUILD THE POLICY FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS	12
WORK TO ADDRESS HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IS REQUIRED BEYOND THE REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATE	12

HOUSING IS A CORNERSTONE FOR BUILDING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES IN YORK REGION

Housing is a cornerstone of complete communities, which require a variety of ownership and rental housing options that meet the needs of residents and workers at all ages and stages of life. A diverse mix and range of housing options is a major contributor to quality of life, well-being, economic vitality and community health. Housing has remained at the forefront of discussions in York Region, with many residents facing continued affordability challenges and a lack of affordable housing options. In order to build complete communities, addressing the continued affordability challenges through partnerships, new innovations and policy is imperative. Through these various partnerships between both public and private sector actors, York Region works to support a full mix and range of housing options across all nine local municipalities.

York Region monitors the affordability of new housing units each year to determine if York Region Official Plan affordability targets are met

Provincial policy requires York Region to establish and implement affordable housing targets. York Region's targets are identified through the York Region Official Plan (ROP), which requires that 35% of new housing in Regional Centres and Key Development Areas, and 25% of new housing outside of those areas, be affordable.

York Regional Council endorsed the Affordable Housing Measuring and Monitoring Guidelines in June 2015. An update to the *Guidelines* was approved in 2018 to better reflect on the ground reality in terms of how the amount, type and location of new affordable housing units are analyzed. The Guidelines establish a standardized approach to identify and measure the supply of new affordable units in order to monitor progress each year in meeting the ROP affordable housing targets and to help inform decision making around housing need.

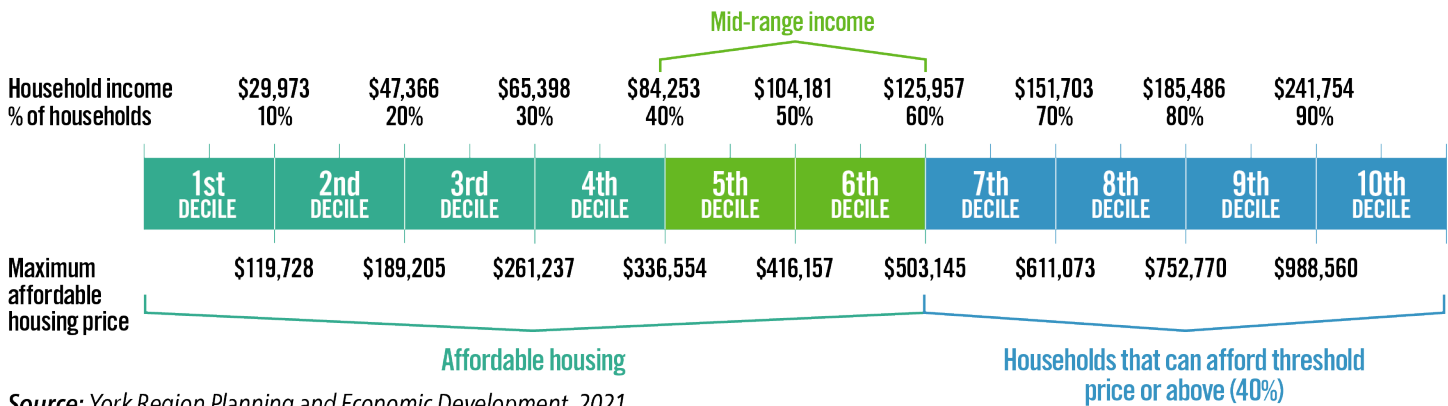
Maximum affordable housing thresholds are calculated annually for rental and ownership tenures

The affordable housing thresholds are calculated annually for both ownership and rental units, based on Provincial legislation and definitions in the York Region context. The thresholds provide the upper limits of what is considered "affordable" from a land use planning perspective. These thresholds are used throughout this report to determine the affordability of both new high density and ground related ownership housing supply. All new rental supply is monitored annually, and the analysis is included in this report.

The affordable threshold for ownership is the maximum price that households at the sixth decile of the income distribution can afford to pay and includes the cost of a mortgage, mortgage insurance, a minimum of a 5% down payment for the first \$500,000 and 10% on the remaining portion over \$500,000 up to \$1 million¹, as well as property taxes. As displayed in **Figure 1**, the maximum ownership threshold for York Region in 2020 is \$503,145, the first year of monitoring that it is over the \$500,000 threshold and based on a household income of \$125,957.

¹ For CMHC-insured mortgage loans, individuals need a minimum down payment of 5% for the purchase price of \$500,000 or less and when the purchase price is above \$500,000, the minimum down payment is 5% for the first \$500,000 and 10% for the remaining portion.

Figure 1 York Region Household Income Distribution and Affordable Ownership Thresholds, 2020²



Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development, 2021.
Based on Statistics Canada, Bank of Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation data

2020 LOCAL MAXIMUM AFFORDABLE HOUSING THRESHOLDS RANGE FROM \$407,374 TO \$503,145

Table 1 provides the maximum local municipal affordable ownership thresholds for 2020, for the lowest earning 60% of households in each municipality. As average household incomes vary between local municipalities, ownership thresholds are calculated both on a region-wide basis and by local municipality. Where the local municipal threshold exceeds the Regional threshold (\$503,145), the Regional threshold is used for affordable housing commitment and monitoring purposes in order to help achieve region-wide affordability. Where the local municipal threshold is below the Regional threshold, the local municipal threshold is used for affordable housing monitoring purposes. This helps to best reflect the local municipal context and the incomes of residents, impacting how affordability is defined across York Region’s nine local cities and towns.

Table 1: 2020 Affordable Ownership Thresholds³

Local Municipality	Local Municipal Threshold	Thresholds Used for Commitments and Monitoring
Aurora	\$555,918	\$503,145
East Gwillimbury	\$536,246	\$503,145
Georgina	\$407,374	\$407,374
King	\$621,071	\$503,145
Markham	\$480,723	\$480,723
Newmarket	\$496,104	\$496,104
Richmond Hill	\$482,413	\$482,413
Vaughan	\$557,380	\$503,145
Whitchurch-Stouffville	\$531,308	\$503,145

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development, 2021
Based on Statistics Canada, Bank of Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation data

² The figure simplifies York Region’s housing market and represents all households in York Region. The figure separates York Region’s households into ten separate decile groups based on household income, each decile representing 10% of the total household population. The distribution identifies that the affordable ownership housing thresholds must provide a maximum price that is affordable to 40% of households, which is measured to the sixth decile of the income distribution.

³ Throughout the Region, there are significant variations in average household income by local municipality, which in turn impacts the maximum income-based affordable housing threshold. The local municipal threshold seeks to reflect the differences in the demographics and better reflect actual average affordable prices at the local level.

YORK REGION'S HOUSING AFFORDABILITY TARGETS ARE NOT BEING ACHIEVED WITH ONLY 8% AFFORDABLE NEW UNITS, CHALLENGING COMPLETE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Table 2 displays the number and percentage of new affordable units in 2020 by local municipality and tenure based on the thresholds in **Figure 1**. For monitoring purposes, all rental units are coded as affordable due to data limitations of rents charged on new rental units, both in the primary and secondary rental markets. Average market rents reported by CMHC Rental Market Housing report are evaluated in **Table 5**.

Table 2: New Affordable Housing Monitoring Analysis, 2020

Local Municipality	Ownership Units		Rental Units*		All Units	
	Total Units	Affordable Units	Total Units	Affordable Units	Total Units	Affordable Units
Aurora	210	0 (0%)	11	11 (100%)	221	11 (5%)
East Gwillimbury	391	0 (0%)	7	7 (100%)	398	7 (2%)
Georgina	153	0 (0%)	13	13 (100%)	166	13 (8%)
King	8	0 (0%)	-	-	8	0 (0%)
Markham	976	26 (3%)	37	37 (100%)	1,013	63 (6%)
Newmarket	195	38 (19%)	41	41 (100%)	236	79 (33%)
Richmond Hill	649	11 (2%)	-	-	649	11 (2%)
Vaughan	3,700	254 (7%)	55	55 (100%)	3,755	309 (8%)
Whitchurch-Stouffville	168	4 (2%)	3	3 (100%)	171	7 (4%)
York Region	6,450	333 (5%)	167	167 (100%)	6,617	500 (8%)

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development, 2021.

Based on Teranet, RealNet and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation data

*All rental is coded as affordable due to data limitations

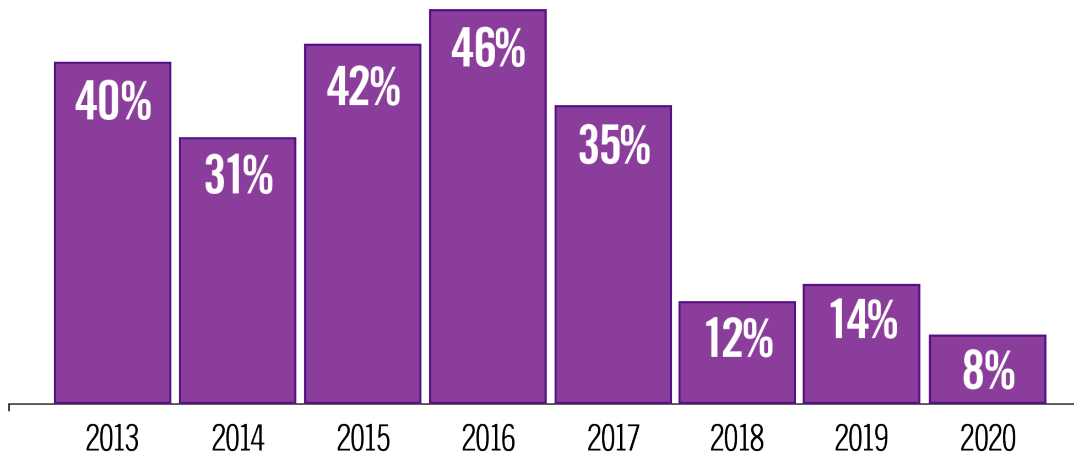
Of the 333 new affordable ownership units in 2020, 72% were one-bedroom, with 27% studio apartments and only 1% ground related housing stock. In 2019, 91% of the new affordable ownership units were one-bedroom units. This highlights an increasing reliance on studio apartments to deliver affordable units to the market and declining number of one or more-bedroom units that are affordable each year. Out of all the new one-bedroom units monitored in 2020, the number of affordable, one-bedroom units was 11%, a decrease from 30% in 2019, 57% in 2018, 94% in 2017 and 95% in 2016. This highlights a decline in affordability of one-bedroom units in York Region over the past few monitoring years.

These findings emphasize the continued lack of affordable ownership options across all housing structure types, relying on small unit sizes with a growing reliance on studios to deliver affordable housing stock to York Region's households. Similarly, the number of affordable two-bedroom units monitored was 0%, the same as 2019 and 2018, a decrease from 11% in 2017 and 51% in 2016. Overall, this is of growing concern as it represents a lack of suitable housing options in York Region for families, due to a lack of affordable family-sized units.

IN 2020, THE TREND OF FEW AFFORDABLE UNITS MONITORED CONTINUES WHICH MAY IMPACT YORK REGION'S ABILITY TO MEET FORECASTED POPULATION GROWTH

Figure 2 provides an overview of the percentage of new ownership and rental units below the affordable thresholds from 2013 – when the Region began tracking affordability – to 2020. The increase from 12% in 2018 to 14% in 2019 is mainly due to the 162 new community housing units that became available in 2019. Similar to 2019, affordable options were not consistently represented in all local municipalities and across all unit types and tenures in 2020.

Figure 2: New Units below York Region's Affordable Threshold, 2013 to 2020



The same trend of few affordable options remains an issue for the long-term growth and vitality of York Region's local businesses and economy. This uneven representation of affordable options leads to many residents choosing unsuitable housing and could cause clusters of affordability rather than the even distribution of a mix and range of housing options found in complete communities. It may also lead to many people choosing more affordable alternatives to York Region. Across the nine local municipalities, affordable housing is foundational to attract new residents, business and economic growth. Watson and Associates Economists (Watson) were hired to conduct a foundational housing analysis report, outlined in [Attachment 2](#) of the Regional Official Plan Update - Housing Challenges and opportunities report, which evaluated housing affordability as one factor that has led to slower growth in the Region over the last decade. Based on their research, Watson has determined that a lack of housing options across York Region, most notably affordable low-density housing (missing middle housing) and purpose-built rental housing, has likely contributed to limiting the Region's recent population growth. As affordability continues to decline, this will impact forecasted population, employment and household growth.

There has been an increasing reliance on new high-density ownership units to meet York Region Official Plan targets for new affordable housing stock. In 2020, only 8% of new high-density units met the affordability threshold compared to a few affordable units in the ground related supply (around 1%). This reflects a similar declining trend in recent years, where 26% in 2018 and 18% in 2019 of new high density was affordable, but no ground related supply was affordable. However, this was a significant decrease from 2017, with 50% of new high-density units and 5% of ground related units falling below the affordability threshold. This highlights that even new high-density ownership stock has become less affordable over time, as well as declining affordability overall across all densities since previous monitoring years.

PURPOSE BUILT RENTAL HOUSING HAS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

The majority of new housing stock monitored in 2020 is ownership housing, consistent with other monitoring years, but there is a growing reliance on rental housing to support more affordable housing options. The ownership market accounted for 67% of the affordable units region-wide and rental units accounted for 33% of affordable units in 2020. In 2019, the ownership market accounted for 79% of affordable units and 21% of affordable units were new rental. Due to data gaps, all rental units are coded as “affordable” for monitoring purposes. This included 36 new purpose-built rental units⁴, no new community housing units⁵, and 131 newly registered second suites for a total of 167 new rental units in 2020. As rental units are all coded as affordable, these new units are used to achieve the York Region Official Plan targets each year, which may over-represent the true depth of affordability for residents. However, purpose-built rental units provide affordable options to many mid-range income households and are a major contributor to the solution of the housing challenges facing York Region. The rental stock will become increasingly important as we see a continued decline in affordable ownership options across all housing sizes. The breakdown of affordable housing by tenure is further exemplified with 97% of all new housing stock being ownership and only 3% rental housing, reflecting a similar distribution to past reporting years. This shows a growing reliance on the small number of new rental units each year to deliver a growing portion of the affordable units each year.

The percentage of affordable new units varied across local municipalities, reflecting the different challenges faced by residents depending on location. Local municipal rates of total affordability ranged from as low as 0% in King, to as high as 33% in Newmarket (mainly from growth in new registered secondary suites and small, high density units). A number of local municipalities had no affordable ownership units, including Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina and King, due to no new high-density units. While affordable housing options are available in other local municipalities, they may not be in suitable locations and are generally not large enough to accommodate families. Access to services and transit options continue to impact home prices and rents. Unfortunately, the result is that affordability generally decreases as access to services and transit options increase, impacting efforts to create complete communities. Few affordable housing options will continue to impact the economic growth and development of York Region, with few affordable ownership options and a low rental supply.

THERE ARE FEWER AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS WHEN LOWER HOUSEHOLD INCOMES ARE CONSIDERED

Mid-range income households are represented by the 4th to 6th deciles of the income distribution, which are the 20% of households that are between the highest and lowest earning 40% of households in the Region (households earning between \$84,253 and \$125,957). The affordable ownership threshold provides a maximum affordable house price for the sixth decile, or the highest earning mid-range income households. As the ownership housing thresholds provide an upper limit, they do not address the need for an appropriate range of housing for households with incomes below this limit, also mid-range income households (4th and 5th deciles).

To understand housing need throughout the mid-range income spectrum, the Region also reviews affordability using thresholds that are affordable to 40% and 50% of households (units that are measured to the 5th and 4th deciles on Figure 1). This evaluates depth of affordability for households below the upper threshold, and identifies that affordability only applies to the highest earning households being monitored. Table 3 summarized the findings from the 2020 analysis.

⁴ CMHC reporting tables included approximately 162 additional private purpose-built rental units, but they were counted in past reporting coded in 2019 as community housing. To ensure no double counts were included, this has been removed from the 2020 reporting.

⁵ All Housing York Inc. units are coded as community housing. In earlier monitoring years, they were identified as government assisted/non-profit housing.

Table 3: New Affordable Ownership Housing Supplemental Monitoring Analysis, 2020

Monitoring Exercise (Provincial Definition)	Maximum Income	Maximum House Price	% Units Sold Under Threshold
6 th Decile	\$125,957	\$503,145	5%
5 th Decile	\$104,181	\$416,157	2%
4 th Decile	\$84,253	\$336,554	0%

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development, 2021. Based on Teranet, RealNet and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation data

Based on this analysis, the 2020 maximum affordable price for the lowest earning 50% of households was \$416,157, and 2% of new units (101 units) fell below this price. The 2020 maximum affordable price for the lowest earning 40% of households was \$336,554 and 0% of new units fell below this price.

FOR THE SECOND YEAR, OWNERSHIP HOUSING AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES ARE CONFIRMED FOR HIGHER INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Continued affordability challenges for households in York Region requires investigation beyond the mid-range income (4th to 6th deciles) groups. Staff evaluated affordability for households beyond the provincial definition to gain a stronger understanding of true housing challenges facing York Region residents and workers (Table 4).

For the 7th income decile group, the percentage of affordable units rose to 32% which is a direct result from the large number of high-density units affordable to this income group (84% of affordable units were high density for the 7th decile). A larger portion of new housing stock become affordable to higher incomes; however, it is only higher income households that can afford the majority of housing. A total of 59% of new housing units were affordable to households at the 8th decile and 83% of units were affordable to households at the 9th decile.

This analysis helps to better understand the housing affordability challenges facing Regional residents, showing that many of the units that are affordable are only affordable to a portion of households in the upper income deciles. This analysis determines that gaps still exist, even for households beyond the Provincial definition of requiring affordable housing.

Table 4: Affordable Ownership Units for Households in the Upper Income Deciles, 2020

Income Decile	Household Income	Affordable House Price	Number of Affordable Units (Total High Density/ Ground Related)	Per cent of Affordable Units
7 th Decile	\$151,703	\$611,073	2,113/6,617 (1,785/161)	32%
8 th Decile	\$185,486	\$752,770	3,884/6,617 (3,180/537)	59%
9 th Decile	\$241,754	\$988,560	5,461/6,617 (3,759/1,535)	83%

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development, 2020. Based on Teranet, RealNet and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation data. **Note:** the York Region threshold was used across all nine local municipalities

A LIMITED SUPPLY OF RENTAL OPTIONS EXIST IN THE PRIMARY RENTAL MARKET

The affordability of new rental stock cannot be monitored due to data limitations regarding rents charged for new units. As such, all new rental units are currently coded as “affordable”. Most non-luxury purpose-built rental housing units would be affordable to mid-range income earners and are reasonably considered affordable in York Region. In general, the secondary market is more expensive than the purpose-built rental market and offers less security of tenure. Through the monitoring exercise, all units that are rented are coded as rental. This includes community housing, registered secondary suites and purpose-built rental housing.

In 2020, only 167 rental units were built in York Region. Of that total, 36 units were private-purpose built rental housing and the remaining 131 were registered secondary suites. In 2020, there were no new community housing units built. Rental condominiums also contribute to the rental stock, with approximately 29% of condominium units that permit rentals rented out in the secondary market (approximately 13,000 units)⁶; however the average rents for one- and two-bedroom condominiums (between \$1,931 and \$2,378) exceeded 125% Average Market Rents (set by private, purpose-built rental housing).

Regional rental thresholds in 2020 range from \$1,244 to \$2,179 based on the provincial definition

The Provincial definition of rental affordability is based on 100% average market rent (AMR), as determined by the annual Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) survey. In 2018, Regional Council endorsed the updated York Region Affordable Housing Measuring and Monitoring Guidelines and an updated rental threshold of 125% AMR by bedroom type to encourage affordability in all unit types.

⁶ CMHC Rental Market Report Data: These rented condominium units are not counted in the monitoring exercise for 2020 because they would be captured in the completion data under ownership in previous reporting years. Condominium owners have capitalized on the low interest rates and the lack of purpose-built rental supply in the primary rental market to use their condominium apartment for rent, as the condominium market has acted as the de-facto rental accommodation supplier for many years in the GTA.

The higher threshold increases the opportunity for development proponents to access Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation funding and financing options to incentivize rental development. In addition, due to the fact that the threshold is a reflection of the Region’s aged rental stock, it provides a better reflection of reasonable market-affordable rents as the older rental stock may not meet current building code standards or offer amenities that are now expected by tenants in new buildings. The old rental threshold had the unintended consequence of the majority of affordability requirements being satisfied through smaller-sized bachelor and one-bedroom units. By integrating a Regional rental threshold by bedroom type, this helps to address gaps in the affordable rental supply, such as highlighting the need for more affordable family-sized units.

The 2020 threshold for affordable rental housing at 125% AMR across all bedroom types was \$1,831. The maximum 2020 rental thresholds range from \$1,244 for a bachelor to \$2,179 for a three-bedroom apartment (Table 5).

In order to address these continued challenges of few affordable ownership options and a limited rental supply, Regional Council approved new development charge deferrals for affordable, purpose-built rental housing in 2019. Under the program, the full development charges payable could be deferred, interest-free, for between 5 and 20 years. The affordable rental incentive program is available to a total of 1,500 housing units over the next three years. In addition to other criteria outlined in the policy, average rents must not exceed 175% AMR, buildings must be a minimum of 4 storeys in height, and similar or better local municipal participation is required in order to qualify for the incentives.

As identified, these incentives define affordable rents at 175% AMR, making it affordable for mid-range income households. This income group has been identified with particular housing need, with few affordable ownership options and low rental supply available in York Region. Their housing need has been identified and evaluated through this annual Measuring and Monitoring report. These incentives work to support the development of complete communities, supporting residents and workers in York Region.

Table 5: 2020 Percent Average Market Rents by Bedroom Type

2020 Percent Average Market Rents by Type			
Bedroom Type	100% AMR	125% AMR	175% AMR
Bachelor	\$995	\$1,244	\$1,741
1 Bed	\$1,370	\$1,713	\$2,398
2 Bed	\$1,537	\$1,921	\$2,690
3+ Bed	\$1,743	\$2,179	\$3,050

Source: CMHC Rental Market Report 2020. Private Apartment Rent, Table 1.1.2., 2021.

THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK CONTINUES TO PROVIDE LIMITED AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

When average resale prices are benchmarked against the affordable thresholds, there are limited affordable ownership options in all municipalities (Table 6). The average price of resale condominiums fell below the Regional affordable threshold in three local municipalities (East Gwillimbury, Georgina and Newmarket); no municipalities had average resale single detached, semi-detached or row houses under the Regional affordable threshold.

While affordable resale options are available region-wide, there are limitations by local municipality, structure and bedroom type. Staff report on the average resale price to provide a broader indication of housing options across the Region. In 2020, it was determined that, on average, little to no ground related product are affordable in the resale or new housing market. Some resale ground related units fell below the average and provide affordable housing options to residents. Both ground related and high density affordable options are found predominately in central and northern municipalities in the Region, often with pockets of affordability, not delivering a full mix and range of housing across communities.

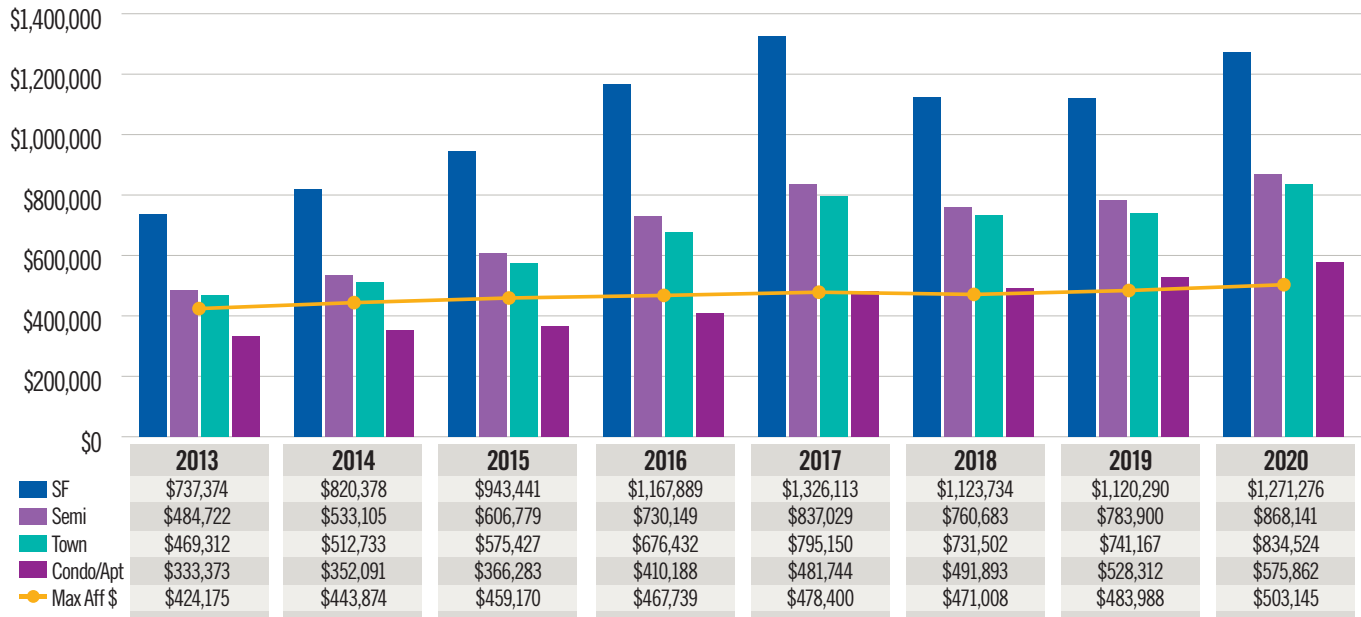
Table 6: Affordable Units for Households in the Upper Income Deciles, 2020

Local Municipality	Resale Single Detached	Resale Semi-Detached	Resale Row	Resale Condo
Aurora	✘	✘	✘	✘
East Gwillimbury	✘	✘	✘	✓
Georgina	✘	✘	✘	✓
King	✘	✘	✘	✘
Markham	✘	✘	✘	✘
Newmarket	✘	✘	✘	✓
Richmond Hill	✘	✘	✘	✘
Vaughan	✘	✘	✘	✘
Whitchurch-Stouffville	✘	✘	✘	✘

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development, 2021. Based on Toronto Real Estate Board data.

When resale trends are evaluated over time, it is evident that average ownership house prices have continued to rise year over year at a rapid pace (Figure 3). However, compared to how much these housing costs have risen, the monitoring data determined through this exercise has remained quite constant. The average resale price for housing between 2013 and 2020 has risen by 71%, whereas the maximum affordable threshold identified through this exercise has only risen by 19% and incomes at the 6th decile have risen by 13%. This reiterates some of the challenges faced in recent years through the monitoring exercise with low percentages of affordable new units available in the market. With the majority of housing types (single family, semi-detached and townhouses/row houses) above the maximum affordable house price for houses at the 6th decile, this leaves the majority of affordable housing options in the condominium market.

Figure 3: Average Resale House Prices Compared to Measuring & Monitoring Years, 2013-2020



Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development, 2021. Based on TREB Market Data.

THE REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATE WILL HELP TO BUILD THE POLICY FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

The Municipal Comprehensive Review sets the framework to support development of affordable housing options across York Region. It provides a foundation for building partnerships and collaborating with a variety of stakeholders to address housing gaps. The proposed policy updates in the Regional Official Plan will aim to streamline existing policies, embed updated policies to align with new Provincial policy direction and incorporate best practices. These updates are intended to enhance the Region’s housing related policy foundation and support future on the ground approaches to help address housing issues. Proposed housing policy directions to update the Regional Official Plan (ROP) as part of the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) conform with updated Provincial Policies, and support future work on expanding housing options.

WORK TO ADDRESS HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IS REQUIRED BEYOND THE REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATE

Policies alone are not expected to address housing gaps in York Region. In October 2019, Regional Council approved new *development charge deferrals* for affordable, purpose-built rental housing. These incentives support the growth of affordable housing and jobs for York Region’s changing population and workforce, aligning with York Region’s *city building* initiatives and vision of creating *complete communities*.

Innovative programs and policies are required to continue to address housing gaps, particularly as affordable housing options are necessary in the development of healthy and thriving communities. Some of these *potential innovations were explored in Attachment 3* to the January 2021 *Regional Official Plan Update – Housing Challenges and Opportunities* report to Regional Council. Further consideration and analysis are required to finalize what could be adopted to support a full mix and range of housing, including affordable housing options, in a York Region context.

Monitoring affordability of new housing units each year allows staff to monitor the Region's progress in meeting affordability targets identified in the YROP. In addition, the monitoring exercise also allows Council to identify areas where affordability challenges persist, and formulate policies and programs, as well as advocate to senior levels of government to assist in responding to these challenges. Staff continue to work with our partners to encourage affordable housing, coordinated through a variety of consultation and engagements including the general public, consultations with BILD and through the York Region Local Municipal Housing Working Group. Supporting the growth of York Region's rental supply and affordable ownership housing market is imperative to the creation of complete communities across York Region. This annual measuring and monitoring exercise allows staff to track our progress in meeting Council objectives and attaining Regional Official Plan goals. The finalized document posted online will include all relevant data tables, as staff receive regular requests for this information.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING in YORK REGION 2020 MEASURING and MONITORING

For more information on housing affordability
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PLANNING SERVICES

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