

FUTURE COMMUNITY HOUSING AT 14TH AVENUE AND DONALD COUSENS PARKWAY IN THE CITY OF MARKHAM

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

Last updated: March 2023

York Region is planning a future community housing development at the corner of 14th Avenue and Donald Cousens Parkway in the City of Markham. Community engagement is critical to the Region's plans, and we are committed to keeping community members informed and engaged as we progress from planning to design to construction. By working with our neighbours, we can address community considerations and build a complete community with housing options to support residents at all ages and stages in their lives.

We look forward to working with the Box Grove community and City of Markham as the development moves forward. For more information and to get involved, visit york.ca/BoxGroveHYI

This document will be updated regularly to respond to questions from the community.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY HOUSING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Housing is the foundation of strong and caring communities. Safe, secure and affordable housing is essential for everyone.

Community housing provides subsidized or affordable rents to households with low and moderate incomes, delivered by non-profit and cooperative housing providers and Housing York Inc. (HYI). At the end of 2021, there were over 15,600 households on the centralized wait list for affordable housing in York Region, with an average of about 335 new households being housed each year. Wait times range from seven to ten years.

In addition, new community housing buildings in York Region include approximately 30% of apartments offered at market rates and are available to the general public to rent. This offers a key component of 'missing middle' housing, homes that fall in between single detached dwellings and high-rise apartments, that provide an opportunity to live in York Region for those who choose to rent a home instead of own.

HOUSING SERVICES

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Affordable housing is one of the greatest challenges facing the Region today. In the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, York Region has the lowest proportion of rental housing at 14%, and the highest proportion of households spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs, with 52% of renters facing affordability challenges.¹ In early 2021, York Regional Council passed a resolution declaring a housing affordability crisis and established a Housing Affordability Task Force to identify solutions and initiate actionable change. York Regional Council and Housing York Inc. are committed to increasing the supply of community housing in all communities across the Region.

WHAT IS YORK REGION'S ROLE IN COMMUNITY HOUSING?

As the designated Service Manager under the [Housing Services Act, 2011](#), York Region is responsible for funding, administering and delivering community housing and homelessness services as mandated and regulated by the province.

The Region's housing provider, Housing York Inc., has a critical role within the community housing segment by providing safe, affordable housing options to nearly 2,800 households. Housing York Inc. owns and operates 41% of community housing units in York Region and has committed to doubling the rate of growth to increase much needed community housing supply.

WHAT IS HOUSING YORK INC. (HYI)?

[HYI](#) is York Region's housing company and one of 43 community housing providers in the Region. As a leader in York Region's housing sector, HYI manages and maintains 36 housing properties with more than 4,500 residents in approximately 2,800 units located in all nine local cities, townships and towns. HYI is also the owner of five emergency and transitional housing facilities with specific supports for youth, women, men and families.

WHY WAS THIS LOCATION CHOSEN?

More than 60 Regionally owned sites were reviewed to identify opportunities for future community housing developments.

The property at the corner of 14th Avenue and Donald Cousens Parkway is already Regionally owned and supports critical underground infrastructure to support York Region residents. The site was selected housing based on its size and configuration, supportive planning context, established neighbourhood and proximity to community amenities, including schools, cycling routes, the Box Grove Community Centre, and the Rouge National Urban Park.

There is also a significant need for affordable housing options in the City of Markham. In Markham, one-in-three households have housing affordability issues and nearly one-in-five households are spending 50% or more of their income on housing alone.² The average price of a resale home in Markham has doubled over the last ten years and average market rent is increasing faster than

¹ Housing Matters: A Review of the Housing Market in York Region (2019 Update)

² City of Markham Affordable and Rental Housing Study Phase 1: Housing Needs Assessment (April 2019)

inflation. The proposed location at 14th Avenue and Donald Cousens Parkway provides an opportunity to help address the significant need for more housing options.

WHAT IS THE PLANNING APPROVAL PROCESS FOR THIS DEVELOPMENT?

Like any proposed development, municipal planning approvals from the City of Markham and community consultation are required. The intention is to move forward with the planning approvals process, but construction will not begin until funding is secured, and all appropriate approvals and permits from the City are in place.

The proposal will require an amendment to the City of Markham [Official Plan](#) and [Urban Area Zoning By-law](#) to permit the proposed built form and site-specific development standards.

York Region submitted an initial application to the City of Markham in January 2022. The application was reviewed by City departments and other commenting agencies like the Toronto Region Conservation Authority. The proposal was shared at a Statutory Public Meeting at the Development Service Committee of Markham Council in June 2022. We are currently working to incorporate the feedback and make improvements to the plans. Markham City Council will provide the final approval for the required Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments. The final proposal will also be subject to site plan control, which is a development approval process in the City of Markham. Through the site plan application process, the City of Markham will review the design and layout of the development, including building location, landscaping, parking, drainage, pedestrian access, sidewalk improvements, etc., to ensure compliance with City standards and urban design guidelines. The City of Markham is the approval authority for the site plan application, and building permits will only be issued once the City is satisfied and has approved the site plan application.

WHAT IS PROPOSED ON THE SITE?

York Region is considering a multi-phased residential development to support housing needs in the community. In the preliminary design, two buildings between four and six storeys in height were proposed. The buildings would include both affordable and market rental options. Feedback from community consultations is being used to inform and refine building concepts. We look forward to sharing updated plans when they are available in the months ahead.

The new building would support a range of households, including seniors, families and singles with a mix of bedroom types. These units would provide high quality housing that is environmentally sustainable and compatible with the surrounding community. An outdoor parking area and amenity spaces would also be provided for residents.

Any development on the site would also include installing sidewalks within our property, at the front of the site along 14th Avenue.

The new buildings would be owned and operated by HYI.

WHAT ARE THE PROJECT TIMELINES?

The Region is working to secure planning approval in 2023. The project will follow a public planning process and will require approval from the City of Markham.

The project will require federal and/or provincial funding to move forward to the construction and tendering stage. Once funding is secured, the earliest construction could start would be in 2023.

CAN THE DESIGN OF THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT BE COMPLEMENTARY TO THE EXISTING HOMES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD?

Yes! All new HYI developments take great consideration of the existing neighbourhood context, and this is reflected in the high-quality building materials and design elements incorporated in the final plans for the development. For examples of recently completed York Region community housing developments and design features, please visit the [New Developments and Proposed Projects page](#).

WHAT IS THE IMPACT TO THE EXISTING COMMUNITY?

As the City of Markham considers York Region's request for a future community housing development, a number of studies, including environmental and traffic studies, will be required to secure approval.

Impacts on existing infrastructure and traffic

As part of the planning process, there will be a review of existing water and wastewater capacity. Any additional services required for the new development (hydro, water, sanitary and storm sewers) will also be considered through the planning process.

A traffic impact study has been completed as part of the development approval process. A traffic study is a tool used by planners and engineers to look at how a new development will impact the transportation network. The study assessed the potential impact of the redevelopment and identified ways to ensure the road network operates safely and effectively. Traffic counts are done during the busiest times of the day. The study indicates that vehicular traffic associated with the proposed development can be accommodated along Vettese Court with minimal impacts to existing travel times. The results of this study will be evaluated by City of Markham traffic engineers and planners to confirm that there are no adverse impacts to the community. Several transportation demand management strategies are being considered to help reduce vehicular traffic and parking needs associated with the proposed development. Some options include providing indoor and outdoor bicycle parking and public transit education campaigns to encourage the use of active transportation options.

Impacts on natural areas

The proposed development will be reviewed by the [Toronto Region Conservation Authority \(TRCA\)](#) to ensure that the proposal does not cause adverse effects on surrounding natural areas and watercourses.

Impacts on local schools and hospitals

The Region works with partners such as local school boards and hospitals throughout the planning process to ensure that existing and planned services can accommodate proposed developments.

ARE THERE PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ROAD NETWORK IN THE AREA?

York Region continues to invest in building a safe, efficient and reliable Regional transportation network for all travellers.

As the City of Markham continues to grow, a number of road improvement projects have been identified, including improvements to Ninth Line between Steeles Avenue and the Box Grove area. Improvements include widening the road to four lanes and building walking and cycling facilities. These improvements are part of a joint project with the City of Toronto that will include widening Steeles Avenue to six lanes, between Ninth Line and Morningside Avenue. Construction for this project is currently scheduled to begin in 2025.

WHAT AMENITIES ARE CLOSE TO THIS SITE?

The location at 14th Avenue and Donald Cousens Parkway is situated in the Box Grove community and well-suited for a future community housing location. The site is located close to amenities, including schools, the Box Grove Community Centre, parks and outdoor amenities spaces such as Rouge National Park. Major shopping centres with grocery stores, medical offices and daycare are within 1.5 kilometres of the site. The site is directly serviced by [York Region Transit \(YRT\)](#), including the 14th Avenue and Milliken bus routes, as well as the Highway 7, Ninth Line and Box Grove Express bus routes within a ten-minute walk.

HOW WILL RESIDENTS ACCESS AMENITIES AND SERVICES IN THE AREA WITHOUT ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION?

In addition to the regular bus routes, there are several YRT services that are available to future residents:

- [Mobility On-Request \(MOR\)](#) provides specialized door-to-door transit service using smaller vehicles:
 - MOR 65+ is available across York Region for seniors 65 years or older. Seniors travelling within York Region simply call YRT at [1-866-744-1119](tel:1-866-744-1119), and YRT will pick them up and take them to their desired location within five kilometres of their home. This can be a grocery store, doctor's office, pharmacy or any other address.
 - MOR-Paratransit is YRT's specialized transit service for people with physical or functional disabilities who may be unable to use other YRT services for the entire duration of their trip.
- [The Transit Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) is available for all eligible York Region residents between the ages of 18 to 64 years old. Participants are provided a free PRESTO card and are

eligible for a 50% discount on a single ride (current TAP fare \$1.98). After 40 trip rides in a calendar month, any additional rides become free for the remainder of the calendar month.

- YRT offers Travel Training for York Region residents of all ages and abilities who need additional knowledge and skills to use YRT independently. Additional information on myRide Travel Training can be obtained via email myride@york.ca or by telephone 1-877-464-9675, ext. 75867.

In addition to transit services, there are several existing and planned cycling facilities located near the site on 14th Avenue and Donald Cousens Parkway. As part of the planning process, York Region is integrating indoor and outdoor bicycle parking spaces for residents. York Region will also explore innovative transportation solutions such as ridesharing programs to ensure all residents have access to transportation services that meet their needs.

WHY DO HYI BUILDINGS INCLUDE A MIX OF AFFORDABLE AND MARKET RENTAL OPTIONS?

York Region develops community housing with a mix of affordable and market rents to help support a complete community. HYI typically strives to provide 30% units at market rents, and 70% at affordable rents (rent geared to income).

Providing mixed-income housing supports economic integration and creates well-maintained and amenity-rich housing options for all community members. Mixed-income housing helps create inclusive and complete communities. Currently, there are 15 HYI locations across York Region that provide a mix of affordable and market units.

WHO LIVES IN COMMUNITY HOUSING?

Having safe and secure housing changes lives and strengthens communities. According to the 2016 Census, only 14% of York Region's housing stock was available as rental, compared to 33% in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area. This represents the lowest proportion of rental housing in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area. Community housing provides rental options for seniors, families and individuals, with a mix of affordable and market rate units.

HOW DO RESIDENTS ACCESS COMMUNITY HOUSING?

Once construction of a new development is complete, available affordable units are offered to applicants with the highest placement on the [Region's centralized wait list](#) for affordable housing for the building and available unit type. The waiting list is kept in chronological order based on application date, as required by the Province of Ontario. Currently, over 40% of individuals on the waiting list are seniors.

Market rent vacancies are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Residents interested in market rent units available from HYI can visit york.ca for more information.

HOW WILL YORK REGION ENSURE COMMUNITY SAFETY?

HYI properties are designed with safety in mind. Throughout the planning process we work with the community and community agencies, including York Regional Police, to provide safe, secure and inclusive housing. For the safety of our residents and our neighbours, future development plans will include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and will be reviewed by York Regional Police.

York Region will work closely with neighbours and a Community Liaison Committee to ensure all perspectives about the design of the building and surrounding property are heard throughout the process.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE VALUE OF MY PROPERTY?

Housing values on average have risen year over year for more than a decade in York Region. HYI has operated community housing for many years, and the neighbourhoods surrounding their buildings continue to see the same trend of appreciation of property values.

Using publicly accessible data from [HouseSigma](#), property values near recent HYI developments, including Woodbridge Lane (completed in 2019), Richmond Hill Hub (completed in 2016), and Belinda's Place (completed in 2015), are not negatively affected and have increased similar to home prices across the broader community.

This experience is supported by extensive Canadian and international peer-reviewed research. For example, a report on [Exploring the Impacts of Non-Market Housing on Surrounding Property Values](#) looked at 13 case study sites in British Columbia to research the market impacts of introducing non-market housing into a neighbourhood. The property values in the immediate area surrounding the cases study sites typically either mirrored or surpassed similar housing in the surrounding municipalities.

Additionally, a [study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Centre for Real Estate](#) looked at large, mixed-income buildings developed in single family neighbourhoods – particularly those where concerns about property devaluation were greatest. Results showed that these developments had no negative impact on property values.

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT BE FUNDED?

York Region is committed to increasing the supply of affordable rental housing. Investments from provincial and federal government will help fund this new development.

In 2021, York Region applied for funding under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's [Rapid Housing Initiative \(RHI\)](#), a federal housing program, to support the development at 14th Avenue and Donald Cousens Parkway. Although York Region did not receive this funding in the first rounds of applications, other funding opportunities are currently being explored, including a third round of RHI funding recently announced by the federal government.

As part of York Region's commitment to responsible fiscal stewardship, consultants and contractors brought on throughout the redevelopment are procured in line with the Region's purchasing by-law.

HOW WILL COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS BE ADDRESSED?

York Region has developed a robust public consultation and community engagement plan to support the future affordable community housing development. This plan seeks to engage diverse groups which may include nearby neighbours, local business owners, community agencies and special interest groups. Community members will be informed and consulted throughout the development process at events such as Public Information Centres and through the project's Community Liaison Committee. Community input received at all engagements will be used to help refine the development plans. At the same time, the City of Markham will be facilitating the statutory public meetings under the Planning Act as part of the planning application process.

HOW CAN I STAY INVOLVED?

A Community Liaison Committee made up of residents and business owners is working closely with York Region staff to provide input and address issues during the pre-development and construction periods. The Community Liaison Committee will meet quarterly and explore opportunities to integrate the new housing development into the surrounding neighbourhood.

Throughout 2022, York Region will be rolling out our Community Liaison Committee application for interested neighbours and community stakeholders.

For more information or if you are interested in joining the Community Liaison Committee, please email HousingDevelopment@york.ca

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

If you have questions or would like to learn more about this future community housing development, please contact the project Community Liaison:

Phone: 289-338-8063

Email: HousingDevelopment@york.ca

If you have general inquiries, please contact Access York:

Phone: 1-877-464-9675

TTY: 1-866-512-6228

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