

January 17, 2024

Dear neighbour,

Thank you for your interest and engagement in the proposed emergency and transitional housing at 14452 Yonge Street in the Town of Aurora. We appreciate the valuable feedback we've heard from the community.

I am writing this letter to provide important information about the need for this housing, address concerns raised by some in the neighbourhood and invite you to a Community Open House on Monday, January 29, 2024, to talk further with us and learn more.

Housing is getting more expensive in Canada, in York Region and in the Town of Aurora. This has created an urgent need for more emergency and transitional housing. Helping residents find and keep housing is a priority for The Regional Municipality of York and aligns with our vision to create strong, caring and safe communities.

The proposed emergency and transitional housing at 14452 Yonge Street is a step in the right direction. The people this housing will support are not strangers. These are our neighbours and friends and members of our community who need and deserve our caring support.

The proposed housing would be owned and maintained by Housing York Inc., and operated and staffed 24/7 by a community-based service provider. Services include:

- Emergency and transitional housing
- Supportive counselling, life-skills training and financial and wellness resources
- Referrals to community supports and resources
- Help to find and keep permanent housing

Between 2021 and 2023, public engagement meetings were held with community members about the proposed housing. We heard three themes throughout the consultation process:

1. Need for ongoing communication from the Region
2. Concerns regarding ensuring community safety
3. Planning for strong, caring and safe communities

Our commitment to communicating project updates

We have done our best to inform the nearby community throughout the planning of this housing, and I assure you we will continue to effectively engage and communicate with you. Here are some actions we have taken:

- Held three virtual Public Information Centres on June 24, 2021, December 2, 2021 and March 21, 2022, with a fourth open house planned for January 29, 2024
- Established a Community Liaison Committee, which includes local residents, and held five meetings with a focus on reviewing detailed plans and incorporating feedback
- Sent printed mailouts to more than 330 local homes on November 10, 2021, 970 local homes on March 15, 2022, and 150 local homes on January 16, 2023
- Collaborated with York Regional Police and community-based service providers
- Included a project update in our year-end email newsletter on December 21, 2022

- Released a What We've Heard summary and updated Frequently Asked Questions in August 2023 on york.ca/Yonge14452

Keeping our residents safe

The safety of you, your neighbours and all York Region residents is very important to us. We remain committed to working closely with York Regional Police to ensure the housing is designed using Crime Prevention Through Environment Design principles. Applying this lens to the building's design helps mitigate potential concerns of crime and safety for people staying in the building and for neighbouring residences. Some feedback we have heard was to increase exterior lighting coverage and add fencing on the site, which is being considered in the building's design. The proposed building will also be equipped with a security system and monitored 24/7.

Planning for strong, caring and safe communities

Planning for this development began during our 2016-2018 Capital Budget process. Regional planners carefully considered many factors before choosing 14452 Yonge Street as a preferred location in 2021. A jurisdictional scan included extensive consultations and formal meetings with municipalities throughout Ontario was done to help define the building's form, features and inform the service delivery model. We reviewed community questions and concerns with current planning policy and reporting requirements to ensure all considerations were addressed. We continue to seek feedback and will incorporate enhancements to the building's design and site plan, where possible.

We believe 14452 Yonge is the right place for this housing. The location was chosen after several years of planning, researching available properties and discussion and consultation, and will improve access to much needed services in the Region.

We are confident it is the right time to build this housing. There is an urgent need to increase emergency and transitional housing capacity. Remaining committed to this priority is critical as housing costs and the cost of living in York Region continue to rise, and the number of people experiencing homelessness increases.

Finally, we are certain that building is the right action to take. Town of Aurora Council demonstrated effective leadership by adopting the motion put forward on December 12, 2023, to address the challenge of homelessness and recognize this serious and growing concern.

I hope you will join us on Monday, January 29, 2024 by dropping in between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. for a Community Open House at the Aurora Public Library at 15145 Yonge Street. If you cannot make it, visit york.ca/14452Yonge after January 30 to view the information online.

More information, including Frequently Asked Questions and a short Community Open House pre-survey, is available at york.ca/14452Yonge. Answering the pre-survey questions will help us ensure the upcoming open house meets your needs and addresses your questions.

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the project Community Liaison, Sarah Buckley, at 14452Yonge@york.ca or 289-338-8063.

Sincerely,



Katherine Chislett
Commissioner, Community and Health Services
The Regional Municipality of York