



HOUSING YORK INC.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2012–2016



NOVEMBER 2012



A MESSAGE FROM HOUSING YORK INC.'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Housing York's first goal is to Sustain Healthy Communities

Good housing helps build healthy communities. The Housing York Strategic Plan 2012 - 2016 outlines our plans for the way forward over the next five years. Developing the plan has taken considerable time, and both of us are proud of the work done by the Board of Directors, staff and tenants in bringing it to fruition.

This Strategic Plan identifies five strategic directions to support Housing York's mission of Building Strong Communities. These five directions, each with a set of practical objectives, are:

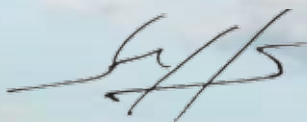
- Sustain healthy communities
- Manage properties effectively
- Manage finances proactively
- Provide user friendly services
- Strengthen governance and organizational capacity

For each practical objective, we have addressed all areas of our business, from tenant relations to long term financial strategies and a review of the organization and its resources.

Today, Housing York provides homes to more than 4,000 residents in 2,200 units at 34 locations. The Strategic Plan gives a framework to support our mission given the rapid population growth of York Region and the changing needs of our communities.

Having affordable housing options allows people to remain in the Region through various stages of their lives. It allows workers to live locally, reducing commute times, and supports the entire income spectrum, including low and moderate income households.

We look forward to the work ahead and to our partnerships over the next five years.



Jack Heath
Chair, Housing York Inc.



Bill Fisch
CEO, Housing York Inc.

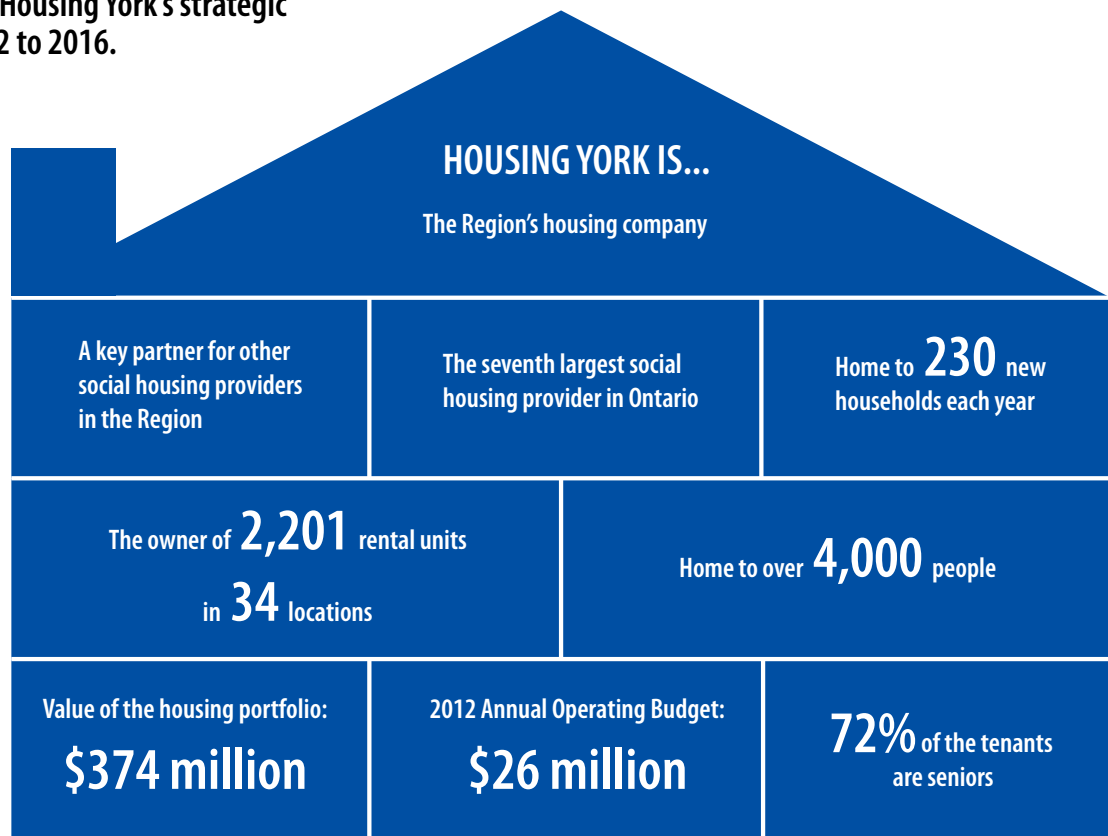
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INTRODUCTION

This plan sets out Housing York's strategic directions for 2012 to 2016.



Housing York is a complex organization:

- Housing York operates three different housing programs. Each program has its own funding arrangements.
- Housing York has to follow many laws and regulations. The laws change over time and Housing York must adapt to new rules.
- Housing York's tenants have a range of income levels. Some tenants need supports to help them live independently.
- Tenants come from many different backgrounds.
- Housing York is growing, with new buildings and new tenants.

Having affordable housing options allows people to remain in the Region through various stages of their lives. It allows workers to live locally – reducing commute times, and supports the entire income spectrum, including low and moderate income households.

No one organization can do this alone, a coordinated and collaborative approach is required.

- *Taking Stock*

The Region's long term plan, Vision 2051, sets a goal of "Appropriate Housing for All Ages and Stages." Housing York's Strategic Plan outlines how Housing York will play its role in the Region's housing system over the next five years.

To develop this Strategic Plan, Housing York:

- considered changing trends and reviewed data on Housing York's communities, tenants, buildings, partnerships and funding
- consulted with a range of groups, including the Housing York Tenant Reference Group, Community Partners, Management, Staff, and Regional partners
- held four Board workshops (October 2011 and February 2012) to explore:
 - the planning context and changing tenant profile
 - partnerships, programs and funding
 - the Housing York portfolio
 - roles and governance
- held a Board workshop in April 2012 to review a draft strategic framework (goals and objectives)
- worked with staff to develop strategies to achieve the objectives the Board identified

Housing York will work with partners to put the Strategic Plan into action.



SETTING THE CONTEXT

- In 2003, the Region created Housing York by amalgamating the York Regional Housing Corporation and the Region of York Housing Corporation. The newly formed company had 26 housing properties (17 public housing communities and nine non-profit housing communities.) Today Housing York has 34 properties.

The Region is changing:			
	2011	2031	2051
Population	1,100,000	1,500,000 (projected)	1,800,000 (projected)

More of the Region's population are people at risk of living in low income
(for example: recent immigrants, lone parent families, people who live alone and seniors)

- The senior population is expected to grow from 11% to 21% of the population by 2021.
- Immigrants accounted for 60% of the Region's population growth between 2001 and 2006.
- The low income rate increased from 6.6% in 1985 to 12.7% in 2005.

The Region needs more affordable housing choices for low and moderate income households:

- Only 12% of York Region's housing stock is rental (lowest in the Greater Toronto Area).
- The Region's waiting list for subsidized housing increased by 49% from December 2008 to December 2011.

Housing and Homelessness systems in Ontario are changing.

In November 2010, the Province announced its Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy. The Strategy includes:

- new legislation, the Housing Services Act, 2011, with more flexible administrative requirements than the previous law
- changes to a number of Provincial programs, including homelessness prevention and emergency shelters
- a simplified, income tax based rent-geared-to-income system
- new rules requiring Service Managers, like the Region, to create 10-year plans for the local Housing and Homelessness system

Housing York prepared this Strategic Plan with these changes in mind.

HOUSING YORK'S STRATEGIC PLAN SUPPORTS OTHER REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Housing York's Strategic Plan supports other Regional Strategies

The Region's strategies include Council approved goals and objectives about housing.

Vision 2051

Goal: Appropriate Housing for All Ages and Stages

Strategic Plan

Objective: Support healthy communities through a broad range of housing choices and supports to meet the diverse needs of residents

Regional Official Plan:

Objective: to promote an appropriate mix and range of acceptable housing to meet the needs of residents and workers

Community and Health Services Department Multi-Year Plan

Goal: Support a broad range of housing choices and supports

Human Services Planning Board

Community Result: Affordable Housing

Immigrant Settlement Strategy

Action Plan Priority: Improve quantity and quality of affordable, safe and stable housing

Housing York's Strategic Plan fits within the Region's strategic framework and supports Council approved goals and objectives.

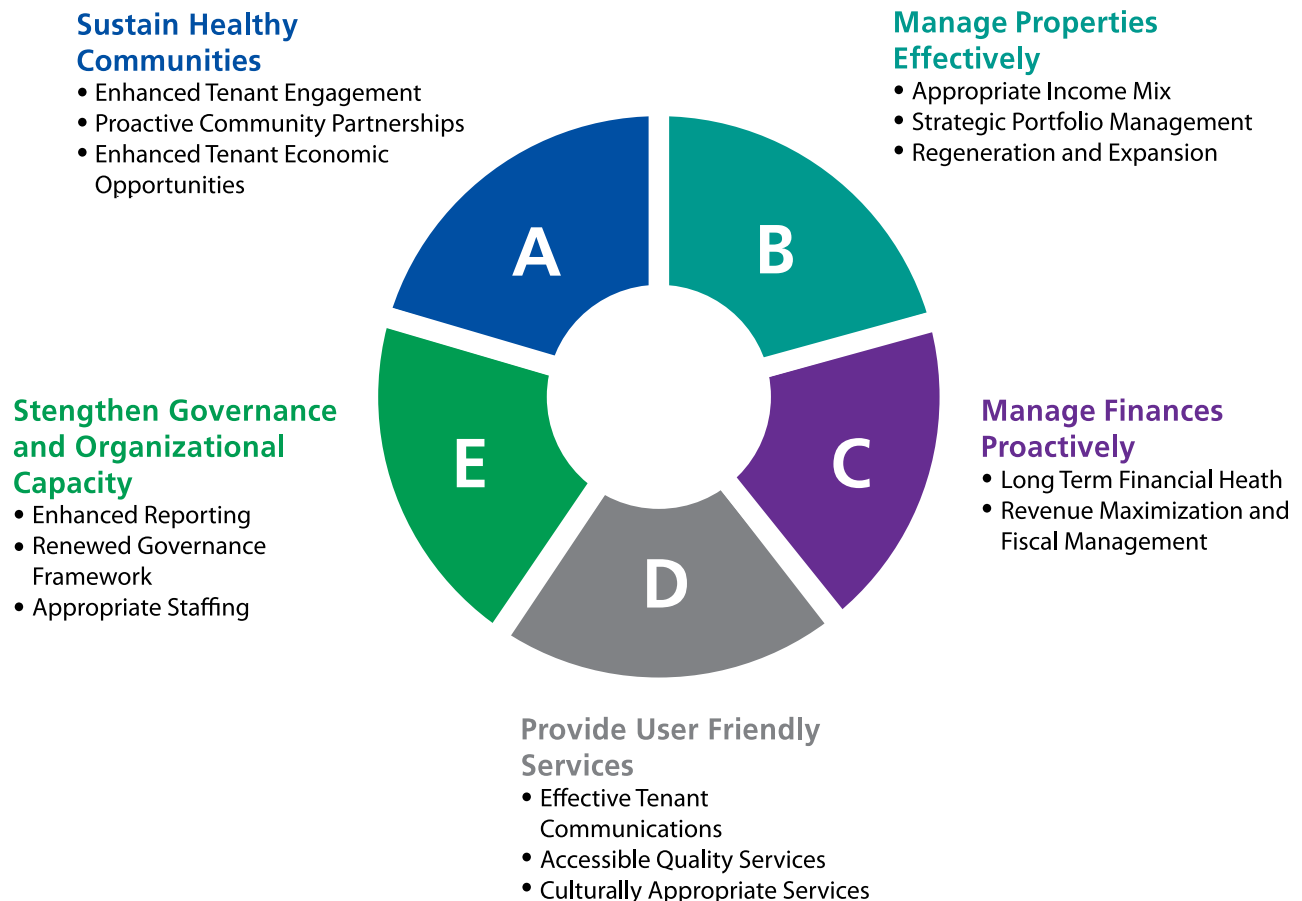




STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR 2012 TO 2016

Housing York's mission is **building strong communities**. The Strategic Plan supports this mission with five goals. Each goal has a set of objectives and supporting activities as described on the following pages.

Overview of Goals and Objectives



A. SUSTAIN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Current Context:

Housing York's first goal is to Sustain Healthy Communities

Housing York is home to more than 4,000 people. The tenant population is changing. There are more people from different backgrounds. More people speak different languages and more people need support services. More tenants have physical and/or mental health challenges. Some older tenants need supports to help them stay in their Housing York homes as they age.

In the past five years, Housing York has housed more than 900 new Rent-Geared to Income (RGI) households. About 65% of these households were seniors. The average age for new senior tenants was 69. Of the non-seniors housed in RGI units, 41% were households with Special Priority status (victims of domestic violence).

Housing York supports tenant needs in a variety of ways. Housing York does not directly deliver support services – it accesses services through a range of partnerships. Examples of these partnerships include:

- The Region's Alternative Community Living (ACL) program supports about 140 household in four Housing York buildings.
- Community agencies provide support services to enable people with a variety of disabilities to live independently in Housing York communities. These agency partners include Canadian Hearing Society; Canadian Mental Health Association; Community Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS); Community Living; March of Dimes; LOFT Community Services; and York South Community Living.
- Housing York works with other Regional and community partners to offer family supports and services like summer programs for children and youth.



Strategic Directions:

Housing York will continue to support healthy communities by connecting with tenants and strengthening community partnerships.

A1. Enhanced Tenant Engagement

- Develop a **tenant engagement strategy** that enables tenants to become more actively involved in effecting change in their communities
 - Explore and implement **new ways to hear from more tenants, more directly and more often** (e.g. enhancements to the Tenant Reference Group, new approaches to surveying tenants – see D1 as well)
 - Develop programs which further **encourage and support tenant ownership and pride** (e.g. community gardens where possible, community clean-up events, youth engagement initiatives)

A2. Proactive Community Partnerships

- Develop an **enhanced understanding of changing community needs**
 - Improve knowledge and understanding of tenants and their needs
- Support and participate in the Region's initiative to develop a **Community Health Framework**
 - Explore opportunities to enhance partnerships with community partners and funders, as identified through the Region's Community Health Framework

A3. Enhanced Tenant Economic Opportunities

- Work with Regional programs to identify opportunities to support tenant employment within housing communities

WHAT WE WILL DO . . .

- Review how we engage with tenants
- Explore the development of a pilot program with Regional partners to support summer employment opportunities for Housing York youth residents
- Support internal and external partners in implementation of a social enterprise initiative

B. MANAGE PROPERTIES EFFECTIVELY

Current Context:

Housing York's second goal is to manage its properties effectively.

Housing York works to make the very best use of the full inventory of buildings and lands. At the end of 2011, Housing York had 33 buildings with a total of 2,117 units. By the end of 2012, the completion of Mapleglen Residences and Mackenzie Green will add 224 more units, a further 10% portfolio growth.

Housing York buildings are mixed income (some units are offered at market rents and others are offered at with subsidized rents). The number of subsidized units varies depending on the funding arrangements for each building. The Region's waiting list for subsidized housing is growing. Housing York will explore opportunities to help more low income households.

Housing York ensures that tenants live in clean, well-maintained buildings.

- As of January 2011, Housing York held assets with an insured value of \$374 million. Building Condition Audits (BCA) note that the buildings are in "good condition" and "well maintained".
- Housing York conducts annual inspections of all units in all buildings and prepares/updates detailed 3 year and 10 year capital plans.
- Housing York implements detailed Preventative Maintenance plans for every property.
- With each new tenancy, Housing York inspects and refurbishes rental units as needed.
- Housing York regularly implements upgrades that meet or exceed the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- An energy management philosophy is now an integral part of all capital upgrades and the energy retrofit program has achieved significant savings to date. Housing York plays a leadership role in energy conservation and environmental leadership – for example, green cleaning/landscape contracts and three stream waste programs at selected buildings.

Strategic Directions:

Housing York is committed to managing assets effectively – making best use of the buildings and land, maximizing the life expectancy of the buildings, improving the accessibility of the buildings and units and providing ongoing environmental leadership.

B1. Appropriate Income Mix to Support Community and Financial Health

- Evaluate and work with the Region to adjust, as appropriate, the **income mix** in the buildings

B2. Strategic Portfolio Management

- Implement **better tools and systems** to support proactive planning, investment and maintenance of the building portfolio

B3. Leadership in Environmental Sustainability and Accessibility

- Ensure that new buildings, retrofits and renewals reflect the Region's commitment to **environmental sustainability and accessibility**

B4. Regeneration and Expansion

- Develop a long term **plan for regeneration of older properties** (this plan should consider opportunities to make more intensive use of existing lands)
- Ensure the **designs of new buildings** reflect the changing needs of the tenants

WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Determine appropriate income mix in all new buildings
- Maximize the use of new building automation systems and technologies through enhanced expertise and staff training
- Develop accessibility standards for building retrofits and establish a multi-year implementation plan

C. MANAGE FINANCES PROACTIVELY

Current Context:

Housing York's third goal is to manage finances proactively.

Housing York's 2012 operating budget is approximately \$26 million. Provincial legislation sets the funding program rules for Public Housing and the former Provincial non-profit housing program. Each new affordable housing building has its own unique funding arrangement. Funding varies based on the following factors:

- which (if any) federal/provincial development program applied
- the Region's capital funding (equity) contribution
- debt financing costs (if any)
- the rent subsidy arrangements

In 2011, tenant revenues accounted for 64% of total revenues – the remainder came from subsidies.

Building owners typically set aside capital reserves to fund major repairs. Housing York's buildings were built under three different programs, each with a different approach to capital repair funding.

- The Region funds public housing building repairs as part of Housing York's annual operating subsidy.
- Former provincial non-profit programs include limited reserve funding. Reserves for these buildings will likely be depleted by 2015. At that time, like other housing providers, Housing York will need Regional assistance to fund capital repairs.
- New affordable housing program buildings set aside more funds per unit for reserves than the former provincial programs.

There may also be opportunities to intensify, redesign and re-imagine aging buildings.

Housing funding programs typically assumed that tenants could live independently without supports. The reality is that tenants increasingly need access to a range of supports and services. The Region is reviewing its social work and related support services to identify opportunities to improve the supports available to all housing providers, including Housing York.

Strategic Directions:

Housing York will manage finances prudently – putting financial strategies in place to address long-term needs and to maximize revenues and managing resources effectively in the short term.

C1. Long Term Financial Health

- Develop a **long term financial and reserve strategy** which considers operating, repair and replacement of stock, and considers subsidies available over the life course of the properties

C2. Revenue Maximization and Effective Fiscal Management

- Maximize rental revenues
- Develop and implement strategic procurement practices



WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Develop and pilot a marketing strategy with new buildings
- Identify potential for increased value through review of purchasing practices
- Update and enhance standing contractor program

D. PROVIDE USER FRIENDLY SERVICES

Current Context:

Housing York's fourth goal is to provide user-friendly services.

One of Housing York's principles is "providing the right service, at the right time, in the right place at the right cost".

Housing York provides tenant services:

- from the office in Newmarket
- through its website
- with a mix of on-site and off-site building superintendents, maintenance staff, building attendants and contracted services

Housing York works to meet tenant and community expectations and to provide consistent service standards. For example, Housing York has:

- introduced new tools for residents including updated handbooks and signage
- implemented a property quality assurance program
- developed maintenance and repair service standards

Information and communications technologies are evolving quickly. Tenants appreciate online access to services and information. Housing York will use technology to improve tenant access to services. Housing York understands that tenants' needs are different depending on their languages, culture and their access to and comfort with technology.



Strategic Directions:

Housing York will continue to provide effective tenant communications, accessible services and culturally appropriate services and communications.

D1. Effective Tenant Communications (two-way)

- Develop an **E-communications Strategy** to proactively communicate with tenants and enable tenants to easily communicate needs and issues (e.g. maintenance requests, tenant updates online and via web, e-mails, texts and through lobby displays and kiosks)
- Develop a **strategy to enhance ongoing tenant feedback opportunities**

D2. Accessible Quality Services

- Enhance **the Housing York website** including the development and implementation of new self-serve e-services (e.g. online rent payments, online maintenance requests, receipts)
- Provide enhanced customer service by **offering additional access points** for tenants

D3. Culturally Appropriate Services

- Enhance the focus on developing **cultural competencies in the staff training plan and operating practices**
- Support increased **cultural awareness within tenant communities**

WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Open a new office in Richmond Hill to increase access to our services
- Upgrade the Housing York website
- Investigate options for interactive online maintenance requests
- Develop a strategy to identify and respond to the needs of specific housing communities

E. STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Current Context:

Housing York's fifth goal is to strengthen governance and organizational capacity.

Housing York's governance and management structure reflects its relationship with the Region.

Housing York is incorporated under the Ontario Business Corporations Act.

The Region is Housing York's only shareholder.

Housing York is a social housing provider governed by the *Housing Services Act*.

The Region funds about 40 housing providers under the *Housing Services Act rules*.

Housing York is governed by a Board of Directors.

Board members must be members of Regional Council.

Housing York purchases services from the Region through a Management Services Agreement.

The Region provides management services. Housing York reimburses the Region for staffing and related costs.

Housing York consults regularly with a Tenant Reference Group. The Tenant Reference Group has up to 15 members, representing a cross-section of tenants. The Tenant Reference Group provides feedback and advice to staff.



Strategic Directions:

The basic governance structure serves Housing York well. However, the governing documents are dated and need to be refreshed. The Board also expects continuous and effective monitoring so that it can perform its roles effectively. Finally, the organization structure needs to be reviewed to ensure Housing York can manage the growth and complexity ahead.

E1. Enhanced Reporting

- Enhance **strategic reporting to the Board**
- Develop a new approach for **annual reporting** to the community

E2. Renewed Governance Framework

- Review and update Housing York's **governance documents** to address the changing environment and clarify roles and authorities

E3. Appropriate Staffing

- Review and refine the **organizational structure and resources** in place to enable Housing York to manage growth and increasing complexity



WHAT WE WILL DO...

- Develop a Shareholder Direction
- Update Housing York's Management Services Agreement and By-laws
- Conduct a Housing Services organizational review

APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The strategic plan will guide Housing York from 2012 through 2016. As part of each year's business planning process, Housing York will propose specific actions and identify the budget implications. Housing York will monitor the changing environment annually and adjust the strategies as necessary.

Progress Monitoring and Reporting

Housing York will continue to listen to tenants and partners through both formal and informal engagement. Housing York will develop specific metrics for monitoring progress and report annually to the Board and to the community.

WORK IN PROGRESS:

- The research and analysis required to support development of Housing York's long term financial plan is well underway.
- Development of a plan to update Housing York's governance documents.
- Housing York is partnering with the Region's Information Technology (IT) department and various financial institutions to enable tenants to pay their rent electronically. The Region's IT department is also supporting enhancement of Housing York's website.
- A consultant has been engaged to review the current organizational structure and to make recommendations to position Housing York to manage growth and increasing complexity.