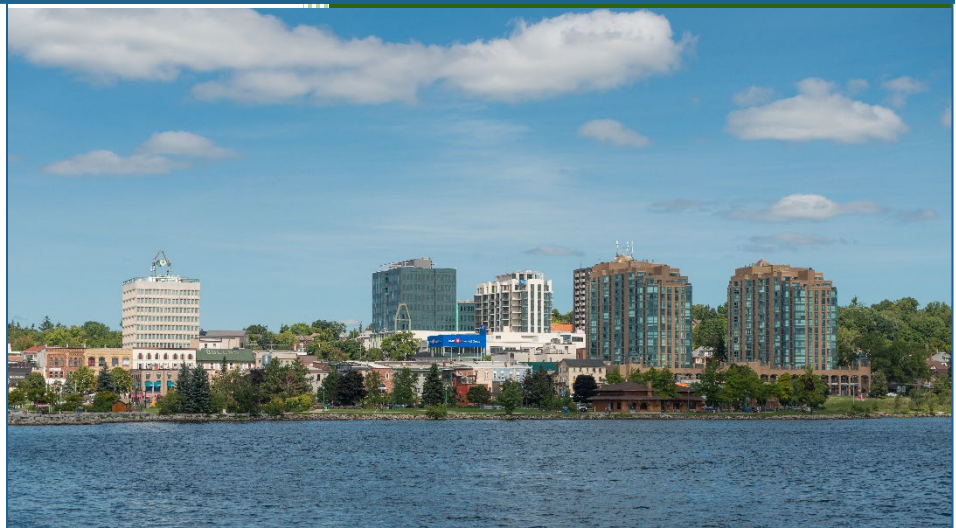




How to Increase Rental and Affordable Housing in York Region: A Summary of Research and Tools



Author: Joe Goode, Mitacs Intern, Research and Outreach
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RLSC Supervisor (& updates): Claire Malcolmson
York University Supervisor: Professor Laura Taylor

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A report for the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, supported by MITACS internship program and York University

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the topic of affordable housing in York Region, and to answer the question, *How do we increase the supply of rental and affordable housing in York Region?* Our hope is that it will inform politicians and the public about current housing challenges and how to overcome them.

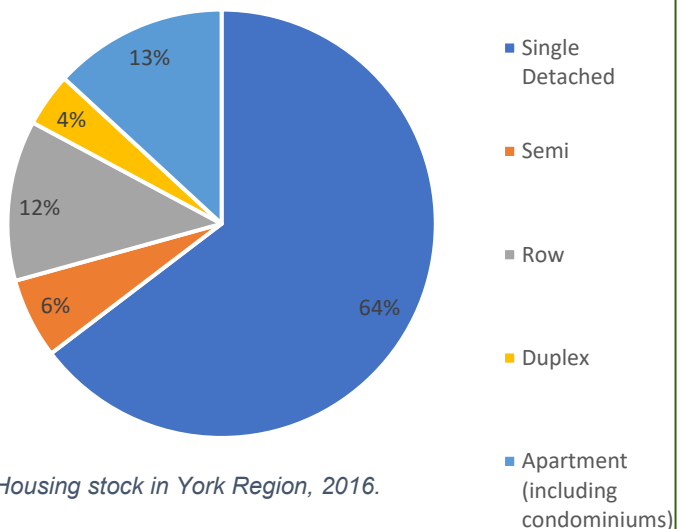
We argue that increasing the stock of affordable and rental housing will provide social, environmental, and economic benefits to unsustainable sprawling communities.

This report discusses the rationale for more rental supply by looking at the policy context, and the types of housing needed, supported by York Region housing statistics. We propose policy and political solutions as well as typical NIMBY opposition with ways around NIMBY opposition.

This report was originally drafted in the fall of 2022 and was updated twice after the province of Ontario passed Bills 23 and 97 which changed the planning and processing environment for housing development approvals significantly. Interestingly, the province eliminated the need for rental housing developers to pay development cost charges, which is one of the recommendations this report provides for realizing faster rental housing building. However, the province's Bill 23 also eliminates some of the most important aspects of public participation in planning, which is to allow the public to understand and weigh in on development in their community.

The average price for a York Region home in August of 2022 was \$1.27 million.

YORK REGION HOUSING STOCK, 2016

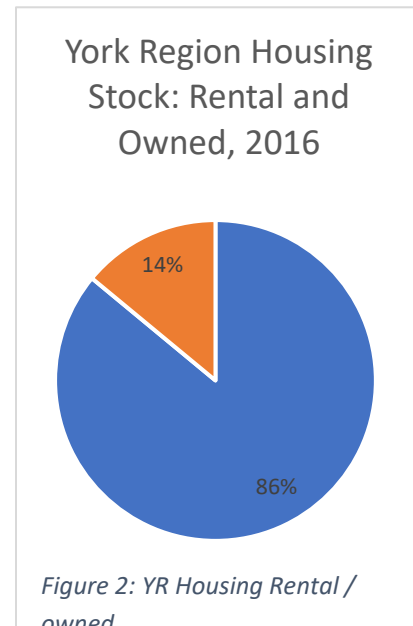


AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN YORK REGION

This section will review recent housing stock and price data. The overall picture is a housing stock with too many single detached homes, not enough purpose-built rentals, and unaffordable housing prices across the board.

SUPPLY (2016)

- 64% of the total supply¹ units were single-detached homes, 227,345 of 357,000 units. (Figure 1²).
- 13% apartments and condominiums³.
- 14% of units were rented.
- 86% were owned⁴ (Figure 2).
- Purpose-built rental comprised between 0.6% to 4.0% of the housing supply from 2009-2018⁵.
- Since in 2012, York Region has seen more private rental units coming from condominiums than from purpose built rental units⁶.
- This is problematic because these units are more expensive than purpose-built rentals and are less reliable for the renter ⁷ (Figure 2 ⁸).



Vacancy rate is a good indicator of pressures on the rental market and is the percentage of available units out of the total number of units⁹. A healthy rental market should have a vacancy rate of around 3% which should provide enough room for prices to remain reasonable, while allowing enough available units on the market to promote healthy competition and choices for renters¹⁰.

Between 2007 – 2018, the vacancy rate for apartment units in York Region did not exceed 1.8%.¹¹ The vacancy rate for private apartments in 2021 was 1.8%¹². A low vacancy rate means there is more competition for rental housing and landlords have more control over raising rental rates¹³. This also means marginalized groups get negatively impacted¹⁴.

All this supply data points to a need for more purpose-built rental apartment units, including high-rise and low-rise buildings, and other forms of gentle density and missing middle units.

PRICES

Ownership and rental prices have been increasingly expensive and unaffordable, as depicted in the subsequent statistics.

One dimension to consider in affordability is home resale prices. Average resale prices can be compared to the low-to-medium income affordability threshold to determine if there are any available housing types that are affordable. In 2020, that threshold was \$503,145¹⁵, and as depicted in Figure 4 below¹⁶, no housing type was below that threshold. This means that the average resale price of all housing types was unaffordable for low-to-medium income households.

Rental Supply for Condominiums and Apartments in York Region

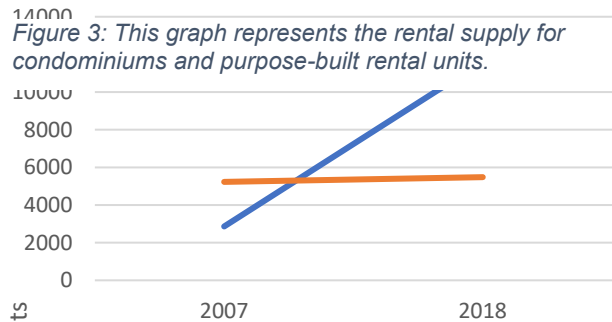


Figure 3: This graph represents the rental supply for condominiums and purpose-built rental units.

Figure 5: Total housing stock ownership and rental percentage in York Region, 2016.

Average Resale Prices and Affordability Threshold (2020)

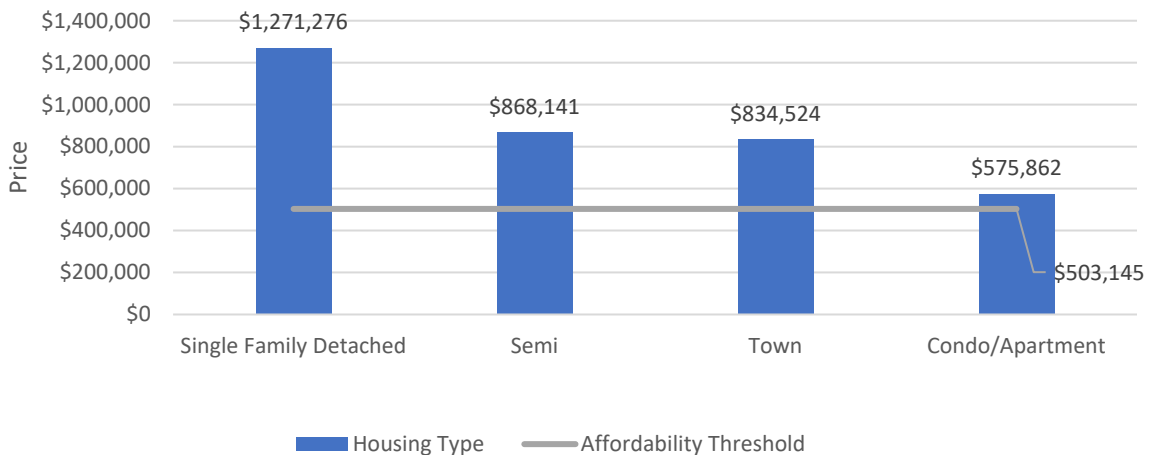


Figure 4: This graph represents the average resale price of houses in York Region compared to the affordability threshold for low- and moderate-income households.

Rental housing is also an important tenure to consider, as numerous low-to-medium income residents depend on it.

In York Region, between 2011 and 2021:

- Average rent for a private apartment increased by \$394, or 38%.¹⁷
- Condominium rental apartments' average rent price increased by \$671 or 43%.¹⁸

Figure 5.

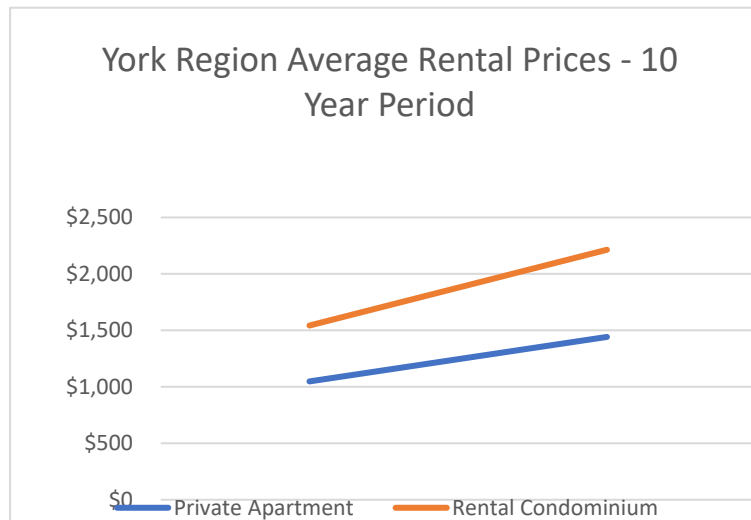


Figure 5: This graph represents the average prices for rental apartments and rental condominiums between 2011 and 2021. Rental apartments increased by 38%, and rental condominiums increased by 43%.

In sum, York Region's housing supply has been mostly composed of single-detached houses, while rental has taken a back seat. Prices are unaffordable for low- and moderate-income earners in both ownership and rental housing.

Rental housing has taken a back seat to single-detached homes in York Region. Housing is unaffordable for low- and moderate-income earners in both ownership and rental housing.

RATIONALE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As demonstrated in the preceding section, York Region has an insufficient supply of affordable rental housing. Affordable housing provides numerous social, environmental, and economic benefits, and is a key driver of macro-economic performance. This subsection will discuss each of these.

There are numerous social benefits for affordable housing. Affordable and rental housing fulfils lower-and-middle income residents housing needs¹⁹ by allowing residents to pay less for a mortgage or rent, and more for necessary items like food or transportation, or educational needs²⁰. It provides household stability, meaning residents can focus on progress in other aspects of their life, rather than worrying about when or if they are going to get kicked out of a rental unit, or if they are going to end up on the street²¹. Thus, there are numerous social benefits to affordable housing.

From an environmental perspective, building more affordable housing means embracing intensification. This means building up, not out, and building more within urban boundaries. The opposite of intensification is urban sprawl, which primarily utilizes undeveloped land, forested areas and greenfield sites. This form of development is a ‘death by a thousand cuts’ to habitat and biodiversity. Cutting into existing natural areas reduces the earth’s ability to sequester carbon, removes natural buffer and filtration zones for water, and puts stress on wildlife and biodiversity. Phosphorus in soils stripped bare and left for years in anticipation of development is a source of pollution for Lake Simcoe, entering the system via atmospheric deposition, and via overland runoff, affecting rivers and streams and ultimately the lake. Other effects of urban sprawl include cutting into the Greenbelt, paving over farmland and reducing local food supply, road salt deposition in rivers and Lake Simcoe, and long-term adverse negative cumulative impacts on Lake Simcoe and York Region’s biodiversity. There are more sustainable options to increase the housing supply than building out into greenfields. More compact housing development has microeconomic benefits for workers, municipalities and taxpayers.

From a micro-economic perspective, an adequate supply of rental housing should be seen as necessary for attracting workers and employers. If workers cannot afford to live near work, this may force them to look for jobs outside the region, thus disrupting the ability for businesses to retain employees, and negatively impact the region's economic functionality²². Not only does this hurt the local economy but society becomes less functional²³.

More compact development also reduces the municipal residential tax burden; its lower infrastructure and maintenance needs cost less per person over time. Why? Because single

**Number of newly
constructed purpose-
built rental units in**

York Region:

2019: 0

2020: 36

2021: 136

detached homes require more infrastructure like sewage and water pipes, which costs more to build and maintain. Thus, from a micro-economic perspective, affordable housing makes sense.

There are also macro-economic benefits of the affordable and rental housing sector. Rubaszek and Rubio (2019) argue that an economy is negatively impacted by a small rental market and, inversely, a strong rental housing regime equates to a stronger economy. They conclude that real house prices are more reactive if the rental market was underdeveloped in a country. The available research²⁴ affirms that a shortage of rental housing contributes to housing price bubbles and argues that an adequate amount of rental is a remedy. In other words, a developed rental market means a more stable macro-economic situation.

To sum up, affordable housing provides social, environmental, and economic benefits to people, communities, and economies. It is crucial that more affordable housing units be built in York Region. What is the legal and policy context of the affordable housing crisis in York Region? And what should communities of the future look like?

Affordable housing provides social, environmental, and economic benefits. York Region needs more affordable housing.

POLICY CONTEXT

The earlier draft of this report referred to in effect Provincial policies, the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement, and the Growth Plan. All of these documents have been changed so many times by the province that we find it impossible to provide timely and accurate information on the planning hierarchy. In the interest of making this report public we are only commenting here on the York Region Official Plan, as it is currently in effect.

York Region approved its updated Regional Official Plan in June 2022, and the province approved it in October 2022.²⁵ Unfortunately, this Official Plan promotes urban sprawl by approving nearly 8000 acres of new land for development to 2051. Despite its sprawling nature, there are numerous policy statements geared towards increasing affordable housing. The 2022 York Region Official Plan (YROP) contains policy statements on affordable housing²⁶ and has set implementation targets for the past 12 years. Section 2.3, identifies some:

2.3.40 That a minimum **25%** of new housing outside of Regional Centres and *major transit station areas* be *affordable* in each local municipality.

2.3.41 That a minimum **35%** of new housing in Regional Centres and *major transit station areas* be *affordable* in each local municipality.

2.3.42 That a minimum of **1,000** new purpose-built rental units be built Region-wide per year, with local municipal targets provided in Table 2.

As noted previously in this paper, the affordable housing and rental housing targets are not being met.

A 2019 York Region Official Plan target was for medium-high density housing to comprise 47% of the total housing stock by 2031 (p. 55). In 2020, 34% of the total housing stock was medium-high density²⁷. Even though this is a good attempt, the target has not been met. Furthermore, 15% of those units were apartment units, most of which were condominiums²⁸, meaning only a small percentage were purpose-built apartments.

In sum, in the provincial and regional policy context, policy is geared towards the development of both urban sprawl and affordable housing. No affordable housing targets have been met; this compels us to dig deeper and look at how to increase the affordable housing stock.

WHAT TYPE OF HOUSING IS NEEDED?

This section will define affordable housing and discuss the four relatively affordable housing types we would like to see more of: missing middle, social housing, purpose-built rental, and secondary rental.

Until 2023, **Affordability** had two definitions in the Provincial Policy Statement (pg. 39), one related to purchasing a house, and one related to renting:

- a. “in the case of ownership housing, the least expensive of:
 1. housing for which the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs which do not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for *low- and moderate-income households*; or
 2. housing for which the purchase price is at least 10 percent below the average purchase price of a resale unit in the regional market area.
- b. in the case of rental housing, the least expensive of:
 1. a unit for which the rent does not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for *low- and moderate-income households*; or
 2. a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the regional market area.”



Figure 6: The above image depicts a spectrum of housing between single-detached homes and mid-rise buildings. The ‘missing middle’ are all of the housing types in-between. Image source: Missing Middle Housing, 2022

Although these are still useful definitions, in its 2023 update the Province of Ontario removed “affordable” from the definitions in the Provincial Policy Statement, which they intend to replace with a shorter more streamlined Provincial Planning Statement.²⁹ The removal of the work affordable does not bode well for maintaining an emphasis on building affordable housing.

Housing advocates, YIMBYs and environmentalists more “discreet density”, the missing middle of housing types that “fit” into neighbourhoods of single family homes.

A range of housing that environmentalists and housing advocates would like to see more of is known as the ‘**missing middle**’, otherwise known as ‘discreet density’. The missing middle ranges from what looks like single-family detached homes in size and scale, to small apartment buildings. Buildings may contain multiple housing units such as duplexes and triplexes.³⁰ Despite not being in the 2010 YROP, the 2022 YROP does contain an extensive section on the missing middle.

Figure 6 shows duplexes and triplexes (stacked or unstacked), townhouses, multiplex buildings and secondary units³¹. The pictures below are York Region examples of the missing middle. The amazing part about these residences is that they do not disturb single-detached home neighbourhoods since they look similar³².

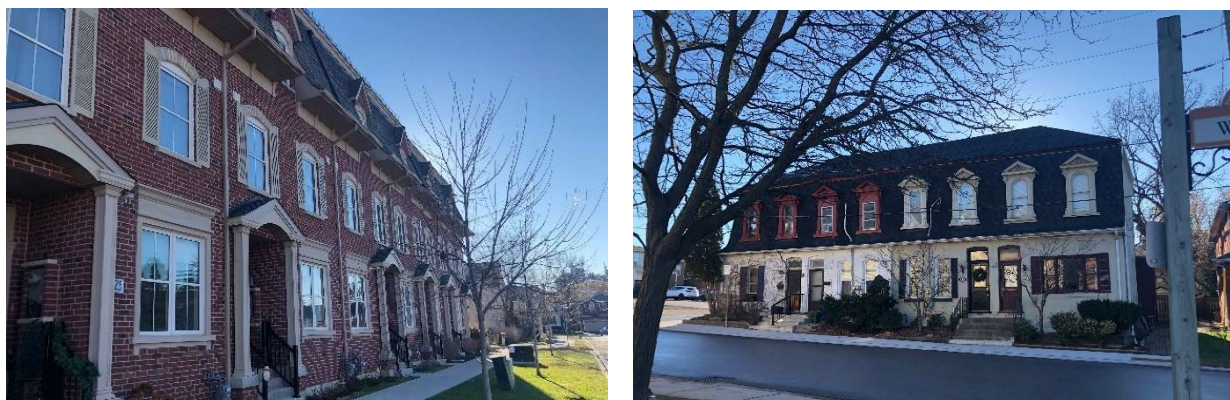


Figure 7: These missing middle housing types are in some residential neighbourhoods. This report advocates for more of this type of housing, as it fits more families into less space.

Other types of housing include social housing, purpose-built rental, and secondary units. These are further explained below.

- **Social housing** - Government supported and geared towards persons with low income³³. These housing units are not offered on the private market and only persons meeting certain criteria can apply³⁴. This housing is meant to be socially supportive, as rent can be tailored to the specific family's income, or simply subsidized³⁵.
- **Purpose-built rental units** - These are multi-unit buildings, built to house renters and must be a minimum of three units³⁶. Typically, the owners are a corporate body³⁷ that provides secure long-term affordable rental options³⁸.
- **Secondary rental units** – These units are built into private homes. Examples include a renovated basement apartment or attic³⁹.

Building adequate affordable housing and an appropriate mix of housing relative to the income levels of its residents, York Region residents, planners, politicians and builders have to accept and indeed promote building missing middle housing, social housing, purpose-built rental units and secondary rental units. As shown above, these more compact forms of housing are in short supply and overpriced.

TOOLS TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY

Eight tools can help increase the supply of affordable housing in York Region: inclusionary zoning, diversifying housing supply, fee exemptions, a vacant property tax, tenure systems, urban wealth funds, enhancements to housing funding sources and municipal resources, and, co-operative housing.

1. Inclusionary Zoning

We would like to see more inclusionary zoning policies. Inclusionary zoning is a policy tool that mandates minimum requirements for a proposed development to include affordable housing units⁴⁰. This mandate is to ensure residents from a diverse income range have housing appropriate to them in new developments⁴¹. Inclusionary zoning counters exclusionary zoning policies.

Inclusionary Zoning

Zoning by-laws should include minimum requirements for density and affordable housing. Inclusionary zoning will enable York Region's missing middle housing to be built.

Exclusionary zoning is a regulatory tool used to prevent building multi-family housing in suburbs composed predominantly of single family detached homes. Webster’s dictionary defines it as, “a residential zoning plan whose requirements (as minimum lot size and house size) have the effect of excluding low-income residents”⁴². This type of zoning segregates lower-and-middle income households from areas that have better amenities like school systems⁴³, hospitals and public services. It is a barrier for these households to improve their economic situation and wellbeing. These types of rules are found in lower tier municipalities’ Zoning By-law, like Newmarket’s Zoning By-law 2010-40 that sets minimum size standards for “Residential Detached Dwelling” zones (p.6). These types of by-laws should be replaced, at a minimum on main and large secondary streets, with inclusionary zoning so that missing middle housing can be built.

2. Diversify housing supply

Residents at different income levels, ages, and life stages, require different housing needs; each neighbourhood should have a greater mix of housing types to accommodate them^{44 45}. This housing supply includes accessible dwellings, multifamily units within low-density and single-detached home neighbourhoods, mid-use buildings with family-sized units, and purpose-built rentals⁴⁶. Communicating with the local neighbourhood is essential in order to achieve this⁴⁷ and if intent, a good design, neighbourhood investments, and financial benefits are communicated, these receive the most positive neighbourhood response and lead to zoning changes.⁴⁸

Diversify Housing Supply

Each neighbourhood needs a greater mix of housing to accommodate residents at different income levels, ages and life stages.

3. Fee exemptions

In this context fee exemptions are the removal or reduction of fees for affordable housing units. Associated fees for building permits, fees for annual rental licensing, and planning applications, could be removed to incentivize development⁴⁹. In York Region, there are various [fee deferral options for affordable housing development](#). Purpose-built rentals, for example, get an automatic 3-year fee deferral, and there is no maximum or minimum on the number of units.^{50 51}

Fee Exemptions

Remove or reduce fees for affordable housing to incentivize development.

4. Vacant Property Tax

A vacant property tax is a tax applied to properties that are unoccupied.⁵² This tool works to persuade owners of empty properties to rent or sell,⁵³ which ultimately will lead to the house being occupied. Such a tax is legislated under the Municipal Act, 2001, where recent changes under Ontario's Fair Housing Plan (2017) allowed interested municipalities to implement the levy.⁵⁴ This was a progressive shift from previous provincial policy, the Vacant Unit Rebate

Program initiated in 2001, where vacant commercial and industrial properties could get a tax reduction.⁵⁵

Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa are the only Canadian cities that already have or have initiated Vacant Property Taxes.⁵⁶ A decision on the Vacant Property Tax in York Region is expected in early 2024. A feasibility study is currently underway⁵⁷ for a 0.5-1.5% tax on vacant properties.⁵⁸

Vacant Property Tax

Introduce tax incentives to persuade owners of empty properties to rent or sell.

5. Tenure Systems

'Tenure system' is a broad term that encompasses several different ways low-income residents can access housing^{59 60}. This section will discuss two dimensions of tenure systems.

One dimension is through ownership interest policies, where residents could have a share of ownership in a property^{61 62 63}. Some avenues for this program include making real estate taxes and mortgage interest deductible⁶⁴. Also, giving properties to residents, or property endowment, provides a basic need of housing and is a powerful leverage point for residents in any future investments⁶⁵. In order to protect this wealth creation system, there are often restrictions put on property endowment recipients requiring that they cannot sell the house at market price, or have to live there for a certain number of years before the house is sold⁶⁶.

A second dimension is investing in social capital. The basic premise is residents would have to participate in training, like leadership, community organizing, utilizing the public participatory processes, and eviction and renter rights⁶⁷. It is not apparent on York Region's affordable housing website that mandatory social capital training occurs.

Tenure Systems

Remove or reduce fees for affordable housing to incentivize development.

6. Urban Wealth Funds

'Urban Wealth Funds' focus on maximizing city owned assets to increase their worth. Government assets such as underutilized buildings, parks, and transportation systems are taken, and their usefulness or potential⁶⁸ is maximized.⁶⁹ The fund is run like a private business (by a professional body⁷⁰), and is protected from political turmoil, which ensures consistent management of the assets.⁷¹ From a government perspective, value is mostly derived from the purchase and/or build cost of the asset, and no more.⁷² Conversely, from an Urban Wealth Fund perspective, a building might have space that could be rented out⁷³, or a park that needs a tennis court that could increase the social welfare of the community.

Urban Wealth Funds

Better manage government assets to increase value and utility – and isolate from political turmoil.

7. Funding Sources and Municipal Resources

Affordable housing is managed by York Region, the upper-tier municipal government.⁷⁴ Funding comes from a municipality, the province and the federal government.⁷⁵ The next paragraphs will break down the two categories where provincial funding goes: 1. Social housing and 2. Affordable housing.

1. Social housing mostly provides residents with a rent that is at 30% of their income⁷⁶. For this housing type, residual costs to operate a housing complex are what the provincial funding covers⁷⁷.
2. Affordable housing funding refers to the production of below-market rent units⁷⁸ which are linked to inclusionary zoning policies. In other words, this funding is to produce some units in a development where rent is below market, and is required to be so for a minimum of 20 years⁷⁹.

This category of funding also refers to homeownership assistance and rent supplements⁸⁰.

Table 1 below depicts the maximum income for a household, to apply for and receive social and affordable housing programming in York Region⁸¹. These incomes represent people who are in "high need" of housing⁸².

Bachelor	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4+ Bedroom
\$18,900	\$22,500	\$26,400	\$31,800	\$39,300

Table 1: This chart depicts the maximum income for a household to apply for and receive social and affordable housing in York Region.

Funding Social & Affordable Housing

Subsidized housing resources for individuals with low income, disability or mental illness.

Housing York currently offers a range of housing options, including subsidized housing, supportive housing for people who have developmental disabilities and mental illnesses, elderly housing⁸³, and cooperative housing⁸⁴. Councillors can and should promote and facilitate more social and affordable housing in York Region.

There are some resources that can be utilized to help understand and advance the affordable housing crisis in York Region:

- [York Region Housing](#)
- [OptionsforHomes.ca](#) – This is a developer that builds affordable condominiums
- [Centralhealthline.ca](#) – This leads to over 40 links to organizations that supply affordable housing in York Region

8. Co-operative Housing

Co-operative housing is a form of non-profit social housing run by a volunteer board⁸⁵. Rent is usually based upon two premises, either subsidized based on income, or market units where price is lower than private apartment companies⁸⁶. Furthermore, each renter has a say in large decisions, including the rent price⁸⁷. In York Region there are 17 co-ops with a total of 1474 homes⁸⁸. More of this valuable form of housing is needed.

In sum, this section has presented eight tools that can be used to increase the supply of affordable housing. The next section will look at why increasing the rental supply has been so difficult, and specifically the role of local opposition to affordable housing.



Figure 9: Example of a co-op in York Region

Co-operative Housing

Co-operative housing is a form of non-profit social housing run by a volunteer board.

FROM NIMBY TO “YIMBY”

NIMBY, or “Not In My Backyard”, in the context of affordable housing, refers to local opposition. This section is composed of three subsections – common NIMBY arguments, how politicians can reduce opposition, and two examples of NIMBY in York Region. “YIMBY” (or “Yes In My Back Yard”) is a pro-housing stance that focuses on increasing the supply of housing within cities where housing costs have escalated to unaffordable levels. YIMBY values include rezoning to allow denser housing development, repurposing obsolete buildings, into housing and other density-increasing tactics (e.g. infill, redevelopment to add housing stock on top of commercial properties).⁸⁹

NIMBY Arguments

Residents are the primary form of opposition to affordable housing, often citing increased crime and safety, tax burdens, increased traffic, increased strain on local schools from more children⁹⁰, the development does not fit with community aesthetics⁹¹, and fear of property value decline⁹². However, we have found that generally these arguments are unfounded. Of course, communities rely on their planning departments and elected officials to properly plan for new residents by ensuring that adequate amenities and services are provided for the population. Doing so is critical to eliminating any arguments used by NIMBYers. So, how can we reduce the effect of NIMBYism? The next three paragraphs will discuss this, including streamlining the development process, transparency in the process, and having informal community gatherings.

Reducing the NIMBY Effect

The first method to reduce opposition to affordable housing is to streamline the development process. Pendall (1999) discusses this concept, and states that more opposition is often faced if there are more approval steps to go through as the project is pushed into the public light. In our opinion, streamlining should be used for targeted housing types, such as purpose-built rentals, missing middle, and social housing including rent-geared to income, below market rate, and homeownership assistance. Therefore, politicians should advocate for streamlined processes for affordable housing.

The writers acknowledge that the Province of Ontario has enacted some of these tools between 2021 and 2023. They did not consult with municipalities, or plan to do this while maintaining municipal solvency, so how their approach works will be interesting to watch.

Another approach is for planners, developers and politicians to be transparent about a development and its impacts with the public at large. This includes communicating the project’s expected toll on municipal services, the expected tenants, its connection to taxes, and the financing used⁹³. This approach is aligned with education of the residents, as mentioned by Lake (1993)⁹⁴ and is aligned with gaining community trust.

According to Scally and Tighe (2015), the most effective strategy in overcoming opposition was having informal information sessions and meetings with community leaders. They may be more welcoming, are likely smaller in scale, likely make community leaders feel heard, and information can be effectively communicated, as opposed to the structured formal community meeting.

This section has discussed the reasons people oppose affordable housing, including fear of property value decline, fear of crime, racism, traffic and increase of number of children from families straining the school system. Three ways to reduce local opposition have also been presented. So, then, what are some examples of NIMBY opposition in York Region?

Say YES, in YOUR backyard!

Tell your local Council or planning department that you support development applications that will provide more density and affordable housing in your area.

When you see a development proposal that supports greater density, affordable housing and stronger communities, write in support of that specific project.

Examples of NIMBY in York Region

Two examples of NIMBY in York Region include 1. a gentle density proposal at 11 and 15 Grandview Boulevard in Markham, and 2. a four and six story apartment proposal at the corner of Donald Cousens Pkwy and 14th Ave. in Markham.

11 AND 15 GRANDVIEW BOULEVARD, MARKHAM

In December 2021, 11 and 15 Grandview Boulevard in Markham was under pressure from classic NIMBY opposition.

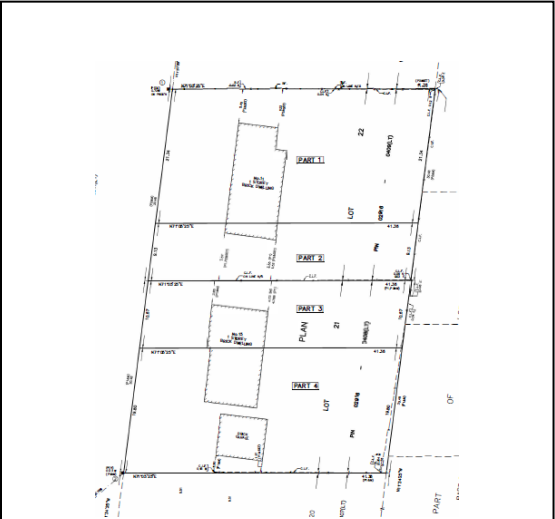


Figure 10: This image depicts two larger parcels of land that have been divided into four. The houses in the middle are existing and would be demolished to build four new ones. From a missing middle perspective, more houses on smaller lot sizes are a good way to increase density while not completely altering the neighbourhood.



Figure 11: This image depicts the two houses. The image shows the surrounding neighbourhood, which is primarily single-detached homes.

Image sources: City of Markham Municipal Report, page 11. 95; 96

In a case for missing middle housing it sought to divide two large parcels of land leaving four smaller lots (see Figure 10 and Figure 11 below).

On December 6th, 2021, the topic reached Markham council in a Development Services Committee Meeting and faced opposition from two local deputants. Both cited the unique characteristics of the neighbourhood were not in conformity with this redevelopment proposal⁹⁷. This rationale is classic NIMBY, as cited by ⁹⁸ and Lake (1993). As can be seen with Figures 10 & 11, to divide each of these parcels of land is not unreasonable from an affordable housing perspective, because dividing those plots is a more efficient use of the land, and does not build on undeveloped land. In terms of missing middle, these houses will ‘blend in with the neighbourhood’⁹⁹.

Supporting this development supports sustainable growth, and inter-generational equity by providing more houses for future generations. This proposal was not approved. Quote the opposite: 15 Grandview is currently for sale for \$2.5 million, with marketing trumpeting: “This Ranch Style Bungalow Situated on A 1 Acre Lot Is An Absolute Showstopper And Has Been Updated Throughout. With Over 5000 Sq Ft Of Living Space This Home Is Sure To Impress Anyone.”¹⁰⁰ Well, anyone except affordable housing advocates, and environmentalists, and anyone who would like a decently priced home.

DONALD COUSENS PKWY AND 14TH AVENUE, MARKHAM

Example #2 is a rental housing development proposed at Donald Cousens Parkway and 14th Avenue in Markham¹⁰¹ in the summer of 2022¹⁰². The 154 unit¹⁰³ development is comprised of two buildings of four and six stories (see figures 12¹⁰⁴ and 13¹⁰⁵ below), and was proposed in a primarily single-detached low-rise community.



Figure 12, Four- and six-storey low rises



Figure 13, proposed development location in Markham

In the deputations at the Development Services Committee meeting, numerous people spoke both for and against the development. Proponents of it understood the larger context and need for affordable housing, while opponents stated classic NIMBY arguments, including concern for safety and that the neighbourhood was different from the housing type proposed¹⁰⁶. Fundamentally, from the perspective of affordable housing and in consideration of the expensive housing costs in York Region, this development should be allowed to proceed. As of September 2022, the project has not been built although the planning process is still underway to improve the project and address residential concerns¹⁰⁷.

Overall, this section has discussed common NIMBY arguments, presented three ways to reduce them, and provided two examples of NIMBY in York Region.

CONCLUSION

The affordable housing supply and pricing is inadequate in York Region. Households at the low and moderate-income range cannot afford to purchase or rent housing in York Region. Furthermore, the low supply of purpose-built rentals continues to be a serious problem. Municipalities are stuck with the province's policies which favour opening new land for development and a more traditional mix of market-based housing. There is a need for councillors to promote and facilitate more social and affordable housing in York Region.

One major barrier to building affordable housing is local opposition, often citing unfounded reasons. A unified effort between all three levels of government, ENGO's, other organisations, and residents need to make this happen. One way to increase affordable housing is to educate residents on NIMBY myths and to make arguments that highlight the positive aspects of affordable housing. This can be done through social and media, campaigning, and speaking directly with local residents. Showing up to support applications for affordable housing, and speaking to the media when the projects come up and are in the public eye are the most important actions that Councillors can take to support a better housing mix for York Region residents.

If the current trajectory continues, the housing crisis in York Region will continue, leaving low-to-moderate income families, racialized and marginalized groups victims of an unstable and unaffordable housing mix.

Moving forward, we want to see our municipal politicians, in particular, argue and advocate for building more affordable and denser housing in York Region's mostly sprawling network of towns and cities. How?

- Use the tools in this guide;
- Get Federal money to build purpose built rental and affordable housing units in every city;
- Use your platform to advocate for affordable housing and appropriate inclusionary zoning;
- Challenge sprawl from costs and equity perspectives.

There is no doubt that the problem is complex, and the solutions are many. But together, more affordable housing and better housing options can be prioritized while we protect our farmland, forests and lakes from the impacts of expensive sprawl.

The housing stock in York Region leaves low-to-moderate income families, racialized and marginalized groups victims of an unstable and unaffordable housing mix.

We need municipal politicians to argue and advocate for building more affordable and denser housing in York Region.

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