Comprehensive Housing Report

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Queen’s Housing & Ancillary Services
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Introduction

In order to better understand the history and current housing environment for students at Queen’s, The Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Student Affairs initiated the development of a comprehensive housing report for the university. Aligned with the development of a new Campus Master Plan, the process, led by the Department of Housing and Ancillary Services, part of the Division of Student Affairs, began with the commissioning of a siting and massing study for new residences and has since grown to include in-depth information gathering, a fulsome analysis that examines student housing issues from various perspectives and considers the various social, economic, geographic and strategic factors that influence ongoing discussions and decisions.

Purpose

This report explores the greater student housing environment in Kingston, Ontario, including residence life programming, town/gown issues and the results of housing surveys, studies and reports conducted by the university and the City of Kingston to gain a better understanding of how student housing is evolving and how the university can make use of this information to guide decision-making. The Report also includes data, studies and anecdotal information from other similar student housing environments in Canada and the U.S. – both as comparators and to examine issues and best practices in other municipalities.

Executive Summary

Queen’s University’s commitment to a strong residential experience provides for a unique experience for students, staff, faculty and the broader Kingston community. Over 95% of undergraduate students spend their first year living in residence – and when they return in upper years, they are likely to reside in one of several distinct student areas near campus. This pattern has important social, financial, and geographic impacts on students, but also on the City of Kingston, permanent residents and local businesses.

Queen’s is committed to supporting student health and well-being beyond the first year residential experience and the classroom. The university is active in supporting positive student living environments within the city, working closely with both campus and community groups to offer services for students and to act as a liaison in ‘town/gown’ affairs. These services range from university-owned rentals and landlord services to student-led community support programs and joint university-city working groups.
Historically, Queen's and the City of Kingston have communicated regularly about issues related to the impact of the university and its student population on the community. Along with the creation of several working groups and committees over the years, both the university and the City have conducted several surveys and developed reports that outline concerns and recommendations for best practices in balancing the needs of all stakeholders.

There are both benefits and challenges to managing a large student population within the close confines of a small to mid-sized city environment. Universities and colleges contribute to the social and financial health of a community and provide opportunities for growth across a number of sectors -- however, many university towns and cities also struggle with the issue of studentification, the impact of large student groups migrating to traditionally non-student neighbourhoods, particularly in areas where campus growth competes with community growth in tight urban spaces.

In Kingston, the housing landscape continues to evolve and adapt to changes in demographics and needs. The City is interested in preserving the downtown core and exploring new ways to manage a diverse community. Students are changing their rental patterns and expectations, leading to higher vacancy rates in properties that are no longer deemed suitable. As well, more purpose-built student housing has opened up potential opportunities for community members to ‘re-claim’ downtown single family homes. The university, with a strong interest in student health and well-being, both on and off campus, continues to seek out opportunities to become involved in housing stock for students, both as a landlord and as an advocate for safe, affordable housing that provides mutual benefit to students and permanent residents.

This Comprehensive Housing Report offers an important snapshot in time - a living document and a foundation for a regular analysis of a housing environment that will continue to develop based on stakeholder needs. It provides relevant information to strategically examine the issues of student housing through the lens of the student, the community, the city and the University, providing sound guidance for decision making around housing strategies and contributing to a diverse, healthy community for all community stakeholders.
Queen’s as a Residential University

Queen’s is a highly residential institution, with 90% of undergraduate students coming from outside the Kingston area and the vast majority of first-year students (approximately 95%) choosing to live in residence. Along with 4,000 residence beds and 1,000 students living in university-owned Community Housing units, there are approximately 14,000 full-time students living in private or company-owned houses and apartments across the city.¹

In his book, Queen’s University, Volume II, 1917-1961: To Serve and Yet Be Free, Frederick W. Gibson describes Queen’s strategic decision to become a residential university with the guiding principle that: ‘In structure, location and operation, they (the residences) must integrate into university life and yield social, moral and intellectual values as well as mere shelter.”²

That approach has been adhered to throughout the years, as evidenced by the consistent growth in residences over the years, and a commitment to a strong residential life program to support incoming students. Current Principal Daniel Woolf’s January 2010 “Where Next?” vision document notes: “Our residential nature, the quality of our students and the reputation of our out-of-classroom experience are obvious strengths.”³

Residences

Housing and Ancillary Services in the Division of Student Affairs provides a wide range of living environments in 17 buildings that offer students a mix of co-ed and single gender arrangements in single, double, triple and quad rooms (approximately 4,000 beds) with shared washroom facilities. Buildings are located on both main and west campus and vary a great deal in age and style. Building sizes also vary greatly, ranging from small buildings housing 68 students to larger halls with nearly 800 students.

Residence buildings also vary in terms of amenities – some offer larger common spaces or retail food locations, while others host music rooms, study spaces or games rooms. All residences feature basic furnishings in each room, as well laundry facilities and access to a 24-hour front desk.

Two new residences – David C. Smith House and Brant House - are currently under construction in a style similar to the existing Leggett and Watts Halls (single room with attached full washroom shared between two rooms). Located on Stuart and Lower Albert Streets, these residences will house an additional 543 students on campus beginning in the fall of 2015 (for more information on each building visit the “Our Buildings” section of the residence website: http://residences.housing.queensu.ca/our-buildings/).
Residence Life

It has long been acknowledged that living in residence in first year is a quintessential component of the Queen's experience -- and as such, all first year students who apply and pay the required deposit by the deadline are guaranteed a space in residence. Along with providing invaluable opportunities to meet and make friends with students from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, living in residence offers students a supportive environment to develop new personal and social interests, and to receive support for academic goals, health and well-being.

Queen's has a reputation for providing an excellent living and learning experience. In the most recent Globe & Mail student satisfaction survey, Queen's Residences received a grade of A- in the “Overall” category⁴ and an A in the “Sense of Community” category.³ Both are the highest score granted in the rankings, and reflect a strong, vibrant residence life program.

The Residence Life department creates intentional living and learning experiences that promote students’ overall well-being and support personal, social and intellectual growth and development. Peer support and educational programming is delivered through a strong live-in team of Residence Life Coordinators and Residence Dons using a range of delivery methods. Educational programming, for example, may include study technique workshops or opportunities to contribute to a local community organization. Other activities are focused on health and wellness, such as yoga classes in residence, or sexual health sessions.

The Residence Society acts as a student government, and also provides entertainment and activities, such as game consoles, movies and special events. The Residence Life team works with Residence Society House Presidents and Facilitators to uphold residence rules and regulations and to build community. Residence Dons and Residence Society House Presidents and Facilitators work directly with students, promoting a welcome environment for residents and providing personal and academic support as required.

There is a significant body of research regarding living in university-operated, on-campus residences that points to four distinct benefits for students who live in residence halls.

- Students living in residence halls are more likely to persist in college than those who do not live on campus;⁶
- Students who live on campus are more likely to develop a sense of personal accomplishment and other social skills;⁷
- Residence hall students are more likely to be involved in campus programs and to take part in extra-curricular activities;⁸ and
- Students who live on campus achieve higher grade point averages and scores on standardized achievement tests.⁹

Within the collection of literature, it is noted that it is critical to design student accommodations that suit both the needs and desires of prospective students. In particular, in the design, planning, and assigning of student accommodations, it is imperative to pay attention to the variance in the needs of the different student groups.¹⁰
Student Housing in Kingston:
a historical context

Residence

(adapted from the Queen's University Encyclopedia:
http://www.queensu.ca/encyclopedia/r/residences.html)

The university first offered residential accommodation to its students in 1844 when university officials, anxious to save students from the expense of local boardinghouses and the temptations of city life, set up their own boarding house in the university’s buildings at 203-205 William Street.

The boardinghouse closed when the university moved to Summerhill in 1854, and students were left once again to find their own accommodation, usually in private boardinghouses near campus. For male students, that situation remained unchanged for more than 100 years; however residences for women became available much earlier, thanks mainly to volunteer members of the Alumnae Association, the association of female Queen's graduates. In 1900, the Alumnae Association began to rent a series of housing for female students on William and Earl streets.

In 1925, Ban Righ Hall opened, providing accommodation for 60 women. Ban Righ was partly funded by the Board of Trustees but almost entirely planned and mostly funded by the Alumnae Association. Much later, other women’s residences were built, including Adelaide Hall (1952), Chown Hall (1960), and Victoria Hall (opened in two phases in 1965 and 1968).

Meanwhile, a shortage of boardinghouse space in Kingston, the result of a war boom and then a post-war boom, finally convinced university officials to build residences for men as well. Principal William Mackintosh also saw an opportunity to take advantage of the fact that most students came from outside Kingston and to give Queen's a unique niche in Canada as a residential university.


Residences were managed by a special sub-committee of the Board of Trustees until the early 1970s, when the university administration took over, with a Director of Residences administering the men’s residences and the Dean of Women responsible for the women's residences.

More special-purpose residences were built during the late 1960s and 1970s: An Clachan, providing full apartments in 1970, Elrond College (now privately owned as Princess Towers) in 1972, John Orr Tower on west campus in 1973 and Jean Royce Hall in 1974. An Clachan and John Orr Tower are no longer residences but are still owned by the University and operated by Community Housing, which also manages a significant number of houses in Kingston’s downtown core.

The university also acquired a house at 152 Lower Albert Street in the late 1970s for use as a small women’s residence (now Queen's Day Care) and bought Waldron Tower from Kingston General Hospital in 1988 for use as a co-ed undergraduate residence. In 2012, the adjoining Quinte Thousand Island Lodge was renovated to become an extension of Waldron Tower, adding an additional 47 rooms to the residence inventory.
Leggett Hall, located at Stuart Street and St. Lawrence Avenue, opened in September 2003 and was the first major residence construction project at Queen's in more than 25 years. Watts Hall, located on lower Albert Street, was built at the same time.

Today, Queen's provides residence accommodation to over 4,000 students in 17 buildings located across campus. Most of the residences are gender-neutral, although some all-female buildings and all-male floors remain. In 2015, David C. Smith House and Brant House will open with accommodations similar in style to Leggett and Watts Hall.

Community Housing

Over the years, the Community Housing department (formerly Apartments and Housing) has played an important role in providing housing for students within the greater Kingston community by offering quality accommodations, managing the landlord contract program and providing convenient access to rental options through an Accommodations Listing Service. The department also provides strategic opportunities for Queen's to expand the campus through the stewardship of the university's land-banked properties – properties and land secured for future academic development. Currently, the university owns and Community Housing manages 70 downtown properties with 115 units and two larger complexes - An Clachan and John Orr Tower - with 260 and 125 units respectively.

The An Clachan complex was built just north of west campus in 1970. Featuring single and two bedroom apartments, An Clachan was designed to be used primarily by graduate students and families and continues to attract this target market, particularly from an international perspective. In keeping with the university's student life goals, a Community Relations Assistant position was added in 2012 to support students and families and to act as a liaison for student life activities and resources. A second position was added in 2013 to support this growing program.

John Orr Tower, a 16-story high-rise located on West Campus, was built in 1973, with 125 one-bedroom apartments for primarily graduate students.

The university first provided an Accommodations Listing Service in 1945, after a booming war industry and a swelling military establishment in Kingston created an acute shortage of housing for students. In 1945, Queen's had only one residence, Ban Righ Hall, which housed about 60 women -- and few students of either sex shared whole houses or apartments as they do today. In those early years, the service provided students with lists of boardinghouses, then the preferred form of student accommodation. Today, the Listing Service features a variety of housing opportunities offered by the university, property management companies and individual landlords, including furnished and unfurnished rooms, apartments and houses.

Starting in the 1950s, the university has strategically purchased downtown properties, both to provide quality student housing and for the purposes of land-banking. In the short to medium timeline, the houses have been used to increase the quantity and quality of housing stock, with a longer-term goal to secure properties identified in the Campus Master Plan as strategic to university growth. Examples of development on land-banked properties include Victoria Hall, Stauffer Library, Chernoff Hall, Leggett Hall, Watts Hall and the Queen’s Centre.

In 1999, Community Housing initiated a voluntary Landlord Contract Program (LCP) - a Queen’s-unique initiative. The contract program requires landlords who wish to participate to undergo an annual property inspection to ensure the property meets municipal property standards. In exchange, the LCP extends a provision in the Residential Tenancies Act to participating properties allowing the inclusion of a 12-month lease.
1 An Clachan Apartment Complex
2 John Orr Tower
3 Jean Royce Hall
This provision is of benefit to both landlords and the university, preventing seasonal vacancies and protecting the student housing stock as student landlords need not rent to non-students in order to fill vacant units mid-year due to the departure of an existing student tenant.

In 2008, the Landlord Contract Program figured significantly in the Hill-Knowlton Report "The quality of student housing in Kingston: Remedies and Recommendations", commissioned by the Kingston Landlord Association to argue against a proposal to license student rental units, a controversial by-law enacted in both Oshawa and London, Ontario. The report highlighted that between the LCP and proper by-law enforcement, licensing was an unnecessary measure.14

The report noted: “there is a system in place – the Queen’s Contract – a voluntary licensing system for responsible landlords that ensures equivalent or better standards to that of the City of Kingston.”12 The Report also stated that “the Queen’s Contract is a favourable alternative to greater by-law enforcement for the student housing stock, benefitting the City of Kingston, Queen’s University, local residents and students alike.”13

**Hospitality Services**

The university, through Housing & Ancillary Services, has responsibility for planning and implementing food services on campus for both residential students and the campus community as a whole. While not strictly a residential service, the provision of food services on campus, particularly in the dining halls, is a vital component of a healthy and successful residential experience. Hospitality Services offers “all you care to eat” food services (with extended breakfast, lunch and dinner hours) in three dining halls, along with a range of menu options in 21 other retail locations across campus for students, staff, faculty and guests, and catering and vending services.14

Two recent studies exploring student, staff and faculty preferences for food services on campus note the significance of food services in a living and learning environment. In “Nourishing Students, Building Community: A Vision for the Future of Dining Halls at Queen’s University” (2010), the authors note that “by virtue of their influence in the lives of students (particularly first-year students), dining halls represent a critical focus of university planning and governance. Developing innovative and expanded programming for dining halls that includes a focus not only on the food provided, but also one that strives to maximize opportunities for student cooperation, engagement, and learning, has significant potential for social and educational benefits.”15

Although Queen’s has contracted out food services since the 1960’s to an external supplier, the university has always been directly involved with food services vendors, working closely with suppliers in all aspects of the program, including meal plans, menus, pricing and retail concept development. The university has a management fee base contract with suppliers, compensating the vendor via a fee for service and accruing all revenue and costs to the university.

Many on-campus venues do not follow the regular programming preferred by the major service providers, but instead feature “Queen’s-unique” solutions, developed through community feedback and fit within the campus environment. Examples include The Lazy Scholar in Victoria Hall (2006), The Canadian Grilling Company in Mackintosh-Corry Hall (2011) and KHAO (2013), an Asian-inspired concept located in the John Deutsch University Centre. The university continues to identify new opportunities for expansion of services to meet underserved areas.

Hospitality Services also contributes to student education through sustainability initiatives and student participation in food service operations. The department has a long-standing food committee comprised of staff, faculty, and student representatives that provides regular feedback to the department. Students were active participants during the most recent RFP process for food services on campus in 2010, and an ombudsperson acts as a liaison between the community and food service providers during the academic year. The Hospitality Services department also provides support for the weekly Farmer’s Market on campus, as well as student-run initiatives such as Soul Food, which delivers unused dining hall food to homeless shelters in Kingston.
Beyond Campus: the impact of student housing on the community

The majority of Queen’s students leave residence after their first year and move into rental accommodations within the community. While these students may no longer reside on campus, Queen’s commitment to student health and wellness brings with it the responsibility to offer services and supports that extend beyond campus borders and ideally result in mutual benefit to students and the broader Kingston community.

In addition, Queen’s Community Housing advances this mandate through the provision of accommodation for students in university-owned properties and through a Landlord Contract program that supports housing standards for students. Many other Queen’s departments and groups have developed strong relationships within the community, notably the Student Community Relations Office (formerly Town/Gown Relations), Campus Security, the Alma Mater Society (AMS) and the Society of Graduate & Professional Students (SGPS). The university has also worked with the city and the community on a range of specific issues with a larger impact, such as policing costs, Homecoming weekend/Aberdeen Street and noise by-law violations.

A number of Queen’s/City committees and groups have been formed over the years to address town/gown issues, notably the Near Campus Neighbourhoods Advisory Committee, the Downtown Working Group and several groups/activities managed by the AMS Municipal Affairs Commission, such as the Student Property and Dwelling Education Committee (SPADE) and the Student Maintenance and Resource Team (SMART).

Studentification

Studentification studies the impact of a growing student population moving over a period of time into traditionally non-student neighborhoods. Significant research in the United Kingdom has been conducted on this subject and a 2013 case study from Cardiff University suggests that there are four dimensions to the studentification process:16

Social – the replacement and/or displacement of established residents with a transient, generally young and single, social grouping.17

- In Kingston, there has been significant displacement of permanent residents in a few downtown neighborhoods, particularly to the immediate north west of campus. However established neighborhoods for permanent residents and homeowners, as well as mixed neighborhoods, continue to exist in other areas. The City, the University and the AMS have been working together to develop strategies and best practices to manage residential intensification in near campus neighbourhoods.

- Student housing can also re-purpose under or de-populated inner city areas, and increase services (e.g. transportation) that benefit the entire community.

- A number of purpose-built student housing projects have been completed over the past few years (other similar projects are in the planning stages), that may over the long term influence the use of former single-family homes for student housing.

Cultural – the growth of concentrations of young people with shared cultures and lifestyles and consumption practices which in turn results in the increase of certain types of retail and service infrastructure.18
• Kingston’s downtown businesses continue to serve both students and the general community, with an emphasis on boutique shopping and services targeted at all segments of the market. A wide array of entertainment opportunities exists, from student nightclubs to classical music concerts and sporting events.

• Services are both positively and negatively affected by the student population, particularly given their unique needs in comparison to the needs of an older, more established demographic. Expanded transit services, for example, meet the needs of the student population, but also benefit the entire community.

Physical – the downgrading or upgrading of the physical environment, depending on the local context.¹⁹

• The spread of the University District has resulted in the downgrading of several heritage-style homes and neighborhoods, as well as an increase in litter and refuse. An increase in crime in these areas may be a result of students not securing their homes, as well as extended absences from Kingston (holiday breaks, summer vacancies, etc.).

• Noise from larger homes (parties, music, etc.) has a negative impact on nearby neighbours and can create friction between community members.

• From a more positive perspective, students have begun demanding a higher quality of housing, and are contributing to upgraded standards by offering community services such as the AMS Student Maintenance and Resource Team (SMART), which provides clean-up and beautification services in the downtown core, and Greenovations, a program that advises students on how to make their home more environmentally friendly.

• A number of security services, such as student-run holiday house checks and snow removal and off-campus checks by Campus Security provide benefits to all members of the neighbourhood by making the area less attractive to thieves.

• Recent student housing developments are trending towards higher-end units with a number of amenities and a more attractive profile, adding to the value of the physical environment.

Economic – the inflation of property prices and a change in the balance of the housing stock, resulting in neighborhoods becoming dominated by private rented accommodations and houses in multiple occupation and decreasing levels of owner-occupation.²⁰

• The long-standing demand for student housing close to campus has resulted in a significant increase in housing prices, and a decrease in the number of owner-occupied homes in the downtown core. The rise in prices (and shift in student/permanent resident balance) has incented many owners to sell to student landlords and move farther away from campus.

• The change in population has affected the types of services and entertainment in the downtown core, however students also have a positive economic influence and contribute to urban regeneration.

• Purpose-built student housing may decrease the purchase of homes by landlords and property management firms, opening the market to a wider group of purchasers, including families and couples including recent graduates and young professionals.
It’s important to note that studentification within Kingston is not limited to Queen’s. St. Lawrence College has also been affected by studentification issues and has had to work with local residents in selected neighborhoods to resolve a number of conflicts.

Studentification is an issue in many university/college towns. In Waterloo, concerns were raised over the implication of student housing on property standards and rental housing bylaws are currently being reviewed in response to these concerns. Guelph has had to contend with noise and student behavior in its downtown, and has installed open-air ‘pissoirs’ to help manage the cost of cleaning up after students. Orillia and Oshawa have cited similar issues.

Queen’s, the AMS and the City of Kingston have worked together on a number of initiatives to minimize the negative impact of studentification, while encouraging the more positive activities associated with this phenomenon, including:

- A Landlord Contract Program to enhance student living through voluntary regular inspections (this Queen’s-unique program also allows landlords to benefit from a Tenancy Termination Agreement provision);
- A Student Community Relations Office – to support students in finding accommodation, understanding leases and city services, and dealing with landlords;
- A Queen’s campus Security & Emergency Services off-campus program that responds to community complaints;
- An AMS SMART clean-up team that provides free litter pick-up in the University district and provides contract work for landlords
- Volunteer opportunities – approximately 80% of Queen’s students volunteer in the community, providing valuable and unique services such as the Adopt a Grandparent program or Big Buddy program, creating a natural bond with permanent residents in Kingston
- City staff/information for students – reminder services for garbage/recycling, fire prevention resources, etc.
City of Kingston Reports and Reviews

The City of Kingston has studied residential intensification in the city’s central core for a number of years, particularly in relation to the accommodation of post-secondary students. Key studies and working groups include:

**Student Housing Reviews (1990-92)**

This study arose from a student development proposal that was deemed out of scale within the community and had a mandate to propose land use planning approaches to deal with the impact created by a concentration of student housing.

The Planning Department developed a three-phase Student Housing Review to address these issues. Phase I profiled current student housing and identified a planning framework. Phase II proposed an implementation plan, as well as an Official Plan and zoning by-law amendments based on the findings of Phases I and II. Phase III identified an implementation for non land-use planning issues, such as property standards and garbage control.

Due to a number of concerns with the review process, none of the proposed amendments were implemented and no action taken.

**Interim Control Area Study – 1991**

City Council enacted an Interim Control By-Law in 1991 to temporarily freeze development in an area northwest of the campus to allow the City to complete a study on the regulation of building sizes in downtown neighborhoods. The study resulted in the implementation of a number of zoning by-law amendments addressing maximum building depth and height regulations, as well as a new floor space index regulation.

**Residential Intensification Near Queen’s Main Campus: Analysis of Committee of Adjustment applications, 1993 – 2002**

The analysis indicated a high degree of residential intensification in the area near Queen’s main campus, but that the zoning bylaw amendments implemented through the 1991 Interim Control Area Study had been effective. Staff were asked to prepare a report with recommendations for mitigating any negative impacts of residential intensification in this area.

**Residential Intensification in the Area Around Queen’s University – 2002**

This report included a study of areas within various walking distances to Queen’s, with a goal to create a range of options for mitigating the negative impacts of residential intensification. The report recommended that a working committee, formed of representatives from Queen’s, the community, and City staff be formed to examine previous studies and address residential intensification issues. The recommendation resulted in the creation of Downtown Residential Review Working Committee.

The study area for this review included the area studied in 2002, as well as an expanded area reaching as far west as West Campus and as far north as Concession Street. The mandate of the committee conducting the review was to provide input into the discussions surrounding planning and development issues in the City’s downtown neighborhoods. The review included a Technical Review for staff to consider the recommendations of the Working Committee.

There were a number of short, mid and long-term recommendations related to architectural concerns, heritage considerations, building depth and the definitions around unit designations and limiting the number of bedrooms and non-related tenants within buildings. Many of the planning and development recommendations centered on the development of multi-unit dwellings with fewer bedrooms per unit.

The Working Committee also made a number of non-planning issues around a number of issues, including proactive by-law enforcement, student information and ongoing Town-Gown activities.

Student Accommodation Discussion Paper – 2007

The purpose of this paper was to review former studies, Committee of Adjustment applications, enrolment forecasts and other related documentation to provide an update on the mid to long-term recommendations of the DRR working committee, particularly in regard to the development of oversized additions and new buildings on residential properties.

The paper noted progress in terms of design guidelines and the designation of buildings and heritage districts, along with changes to the Ontario Heritage Act. Licensing was discussed, particularly in relation to amendments to the Municipal Act, which allows municipalities to license any business or activity that is considered appropriate in pursuing the public good.

The Student Accommodation Discussion Paper made three main recommendations around the examination of student housing policies, design guidelines and a review of issues outside the jurisdiction of Planning and Development. As a result of this paper, the Official Plan was slightly modified with respect to student accommodation, and new design guidelines were approved in 2010.
Urban Design Guidelines (Residential Intensification and New Community Design Guidelines)

The Urban Design Guidelines were developed in consultation with professional planning firms and based on feedback from two public open houses. The guidelines identify elements and controls that allow for the integration of new development patterns and structures to assist property owners in planning renovations and new construction.

Highlights relevant to Queen's planning include:
- Residential Intensification:
- Appropriateness of massing and proportions;
- Diversification of housing types;
- Improvement of cycling facilities and transit services;
- Mix of uses where appropriate.


In March 2009, a Housing Working Group, comprised mainly of city and Queen's staff, developed a special report to respond to the request of Kingston City Council to 'better understand student concerns about rental housing near campus, and to determine whether these concern relate in any way to student behaviour. The report found a high level of satisfaction among students and nothing to suggest a link between housing standards and student behaviour. The report included a list of recommendations, with progress reported in April 2010.

One of the recommendations in the report entailed ensuring that “the housing needs of Queen's students are met by maintaining a balance of university-owned rental units and privately-owned rental units.”

Council then authorized staff to develop a three to five year plan to “enhance relationships, communications and policies among Queen's University and its students, the City of Kingston and the community by addressing areas of common concern, including: quality of life, community planning, student engagement and economic development.”
**Town and Gown Strategic Plan – 2011- 2014**

The 2011-14 Town and Gown Strategic Plan outlines objectives and activities for working groups in four focus areas:

- Quality of life
- Community planning
- Student engagement
- Economic development

A number of topics and issues were identified as priorities for collaboration and engagement. Working groups identified the following objectives:

**Quality of Life Working Group:**
- Provide quality housing
- Creative attractive, clean and safe neighbourhoods
- Promote inclusivity and equality
- Promote a green community

**Community Planning Working Group:**
- Integrate university expansion with urban planning
- Invigorate the local economy
- Improve recreation and cultural activities
- Support the development of transit plans

**Student Engagement Working Group:**
- Promote two-way communication
- Encourage community citizenship
- Help students establish roots
- Connect students to public service communities

**Economic Development Working Group:**
- Retain/attract creative class
- Develop a talent economy and green jobs
- Connect students to business community
- Align university research /programs with economic plans

Outcomes of the working group's activities include increased cooperation between the University and the City of Kingston, particularly in the areas of communications; consolidation and unifying safety information for student residents of Kingston; an increased number of job fairs on campus, including the Live and Work in Kingston Fair (open to St. Lawrence and Queens students); and the development of a transit pass program for Queen's University faculty and staff.
Queen’s Housing Surveys

For a number of years, and most recently in the winter of 2012, a comprehensive survey of on and off-campus students has been conducted to gather information such as desirability to return to residences, amenities, distance to campus, rent levels and satisfaction with housing.

2002 – 2008:

A synthesis of surveys conducted in 2002, 2004 and 2008 revealed a number of trends:

- Although the number of undergraduates living in areas closest to the campus remained roughly the same over the years, the number of graduate students in the same area declined over 18% to just over 14% from 2002 – 2008;
- In 2002, nearly 44% of upper-year undergraduates living in the community were renting a single detached house, and 24% were renting a single detached house divided into apartments. By 2008, only 37% were living in a single detached house, and nearly 30% were living in a single detached house divided into apartments;
- The number of graduate students living with other students rose from 34% in 2004 to 50% in 2008;
- The number of graduate students in a fixed term lease declined steadily from 2002 – 2008 – from a high of 71% to 52% in 2008. Month to month agreements rose steadily over the same period of time – from 28% to 48%;
- The main cause of dissatisfaction for graduate students changed over time – in 2002, cost was the main cause (38% vs. 29% quality), however by 2008, quality became the main cause for dissatisfaction (38% vs. 26% cost);
- In 2008, 63% of upper-year undergraduates ranked proximity to Queen’s as very important, but only 54% of graduate students ranked proximity to Queen’s as very important. Over 60% of graduate students ranked laundry facilities as very important. 24% of upper-year undergraduates ranked proximity to shops as services as very important, compared to 49% of graduate students.

A 2008 Mapping Report (Accommodation Location Patterns of Queen’s Students, Chong) revealed that:

- A large proportion of undergraduate students who live off-campus live within 1.0km (72.43%) and 1.5km (82.44%) of University Avenue and Union Street;
- In contrast, graduate students’ residences were more dispersed, with 41.25% of students living within 1.0km of University and Union, and 64.78% living within 1.5km.;
- Undergraduate students were represented in all of Queen’s residences, as well as John Orr Tower, and An Clachan Complex;
- Graduate students were not present in most of the residences, preferring mainly to live in the graduate residences in the JDUC, West Campus, John Orr Tower, and An Clachan Complex.
**Scatter Diagrams**

Scatter diagrams of students’ local addresses dating back to 2000 were developed in conjunction with the Office of the University Registrar to better understand how housing patterns have changed in the last decade. However, the diagrams themselves may be of little value as the database relies on students to enter their local address and it is not mandatory to do so.
Residential intensification in Kingston’s Near-University Neighbourhoods (2009) – Queen’s School of Urban and Regional Planning

This study was developed to answer the question of how residential intensification should take place in Kingston’s near-university neighborhoods. Specifically, the study examined location of intensification, forms of intensification and key stakeholders in the process, and included a thorough review of previous City and University reports/plans and a literature review, as well as a “Precedent Case Study Catalogue” of nine North American cities facing similar issues as Kingston.

The study made 21 recommendations centered around five goals:

- **Goal 1**: Planners will have adequate tools to ensure that residential intensification occurs in a manner that enhances the built and social environment of the near-university neighborhood;
- **Goal 2**: Residential intensification will occur throughout the study area in varying degrees of intensity. Appropriate forms of intensification should be focused near nodes, transit corridors and employment areas that are capable of handling greater densities;
- **Goal 3**: Residential infill development and conversions will comprise a variety of housing forms, styles and types to accommodate the diverse needs of students;
- **Goal 4**: On and off-campus student housing will include a variety of forms, types and ownership structures to accommodate the diverse needs of students; and
- **Goal 5**: The City and Queen’s University will play leadership roles in facilitating communication between stakeholders within the residential intensification process.
Siting and Massing Study – 2011

In December 2011, a Siting and Massing Study was completed as part of the comprehensive housing report initiative. This process identified a number of potential sites for new residences, and outlined the impact on various community populations both on and off campus. The study, which also examined expansion to existing spaces, scored all options and provided recommendations for siting residences. The study provides a blueprint for future development of housing for the university.

In order to gain a better understanding of the history and development of the current residences at Queen’s, information about each residence was gathered from Queen’s Archives, including the capacities and configurations of the existing residences and the context in which they were developed.

In order to fairly evaluate sites, a review of the programmatic elements of the building(s) was required. The most recently constructed (2003) Watts and Leggett halls were used as the basis of this study, mainly because the planning and design process included the development and evaluation of a standardized single student room, and because these buildings are currently the most popular among students.

In conjunction with the review of the program, a series of assumptions and parameters were established for the development of massing options. The assumptions and parameters were then used to develop scoring criteria to be used to evaluate each site.

An initial review and scoring was completed for each of the potential sites to determine their compatibility for use as a residence site. Any site that was deemed inappropriate was not developed further. Each of the potential sites had comparative cost estimates prepared, with figures weighted for inclusion into the overall site scoring. Following the completion of the cost estimates, updated scores were determined for each of the selected sites. A summary of all site scores was prepared and presented to rank the sites based on their overall evaluation relative to the established scoring criteria.

The selection of the two sites (the corner of Lower Albert and Stuart Streets and the area between Morris and McNeill Halls) was supported by the following criteria:

- The sites strengthen the residence commons and community by locating students in the vicinity of current residences, cafeterias and recreational spaces;
- The majority of the land is owned by Queen’s;
- Residences to accommodate 500 students can be accommodated on the two sites
- There is little impact on the organization of the roads and paths in the area;
- The buildings can be scaled and designed to fit within the context of the neighbourhood.
April 2012 Housing Survey

The April 2012 Housing Master Plan Research Project was developed to help inform the Housing Master Plan and to engage students in the process while complementing the university’s enrolment plan. The project included a literature review along with examples of best practices in similar university communities.

The Research Project included surveys of undergraduates in residence, along with upper-year undergraduates and graduates. Survey data revealed that:

- Overall, respondents were either very satisfied (35%) or moderately satisfied (50%) with their accommodation in residence;
- Of those students electing to stay in residence for their second year, 20% of respondents noted proximity to the university and classes was noted as being a very important deciding factor on why they would choose to remain in residence. Cost, safety, and community of friends were also ranked as very important factors at 21%, 17%, and 17%, respectively;
- Students electing to live off-campus in their second year indicated more freedom as the most important deciding factor, with 24% of respondents ranking this factor as very important;
- The majority of respondents moving to off-campus accommodations would like to live in a shared house (54%) with a maximum of four or five other tenants (29% and 31% respectively). Finally, the majority of respondents (71%) cited the maximum amount of rent they are willing to pay is $501 - $750 per month.
Current Housing Environment

Housing as an Ancillary

As ancillary services, Residences and Community Housing do not receive funding from the university’s central budget; revenue generated must cover all costs associated with the operation. Until recently, ancillary services at Queen’s were regarded as “self-financing” and separate from university budgets. In recent years, however, both Residences and Community Housing have become significant contributors of revenue for the university.

This transition began in 2008, when then Principal Tom Williams, in order to address the university’s financial situation, created seven task force groups to examine key short-term and long-term issues. The final report of the Task Force on Revenue Generation noted:

"Cultural change must occur - the university must create an entrepreneurial environment, one that encourages and rewards the taking of measured risks. Clear signals about the importance of entrepreneurship must be consistently made from the senior administration of the university."

In delegating responsibility for revenue generating opportunities, the report highlighted, "that initiatives should be led and championed by the units that are responsible and knowledgeable in the area, and that also share in the benefits of new revenue."

Shortly thereafter, the Vice-Principal (Finance and Administration) commissioned a report from Snowdon & Associates to produce a report that would provide a framework for revenue generation. The report, entitled "Review of the Financial Arrangements for Ancillary Services at Queen’s University" was submitted in early 2011, and provided a framework for contributions to the university’s budget from ancillary services.

"After provision for the preceding – direct costs, indirect costs, operating reserve, and capital replacement/renewal (where applicable) – the Ancillary unit could be in a position to contribute net revenue (a “dividend”) to University operating revenues."21

As a result of the recommendations within the report (which also endorsed an increase to the overhead to 5% from the existing 3.5%), overall contribution to the central budget from residences for fiscal year end 2011 to fiscal year end 2015 increased 120% from $2.607M to $5.725M. Similarly, contributions from Community Housing increased 102% from $394K to $795K.22

Looking in the very long term, because the existing housing stock will receive substantive investment (see “Redevelopment”), the current mortgage of $5.8M for the new residences should, in whole or in part, be available as additional dividends when the debt retires in 2030.

Housing and Ancillary Services also continues to explore revenue-generating opportunities through the cold beverage agreement and activities within Event Services and Enrichment Studies units.
Governance and Consultation

Residences

Queen’s residences are governed by The Senate Residence Committee (SRC) with representation from senior administration, student government, staff and faculty. The SRC is mandated to:

- recommend policies to the Senate that ensure student life in residence promotes the well-being of students and is complementary to the attainment of academic excellence
- advise Senior Residence Administration in all matters of policy relating to the residence system
- support and encourage the existence of student government in residence

Without restricting the generality of the foregoing, the responsibilities of the Senate Residence Committee include:

- reviewing and recommending residence fees (accommodations and meal plans) and the annual budget for the approval of the Board of Trustees
- approving the overall process for regulating student conduct and discipline in residence
- developing and reviewing guidelines and policies for recruiting and admitting students to residence
- reviewing and accepting the annual Residence Society financial audit

The SRC’s work is accomplished via five (5) sub-committees: Budget, Admissions, Meal Plan Advisory, Student Conduct and Student Life.

Community Housing

The Community Housing Board (CHB) includes representation from administration, tenants, student government and members of the Kingston community. The CHB advises the Associate Director (Housing & Ancillary Services) on all matters relating to the policy and operations of the Office of Community Housing, including consultation with relevant tenant constituencies (student, staff, faculty and community members) on matters directly concerning their tenancy with the University such as rental increases, major projects and rental strategies.

On-Campus Housing

The residence system offers a range of accommodation styles and locations for over 4,000 students. There are 17 buildings of various configurations, with single, double and triple rooms. Buildings range in age and in size – the first residence (Ban Righ) was built in 1925 and most recent (Leggett/Watts) opened in 2003. Two new residence buildings, adding approximately 550 beds, will open in September of 2015.
The 17 existing residence buildings on campus are currently at full capacity. Due to modest increases in planned undergraduate enrolment over the last several years, and in order to maintain the residence room guarantee to all first year students, the majority of floor common rooms have been converted to bedrooms.

In order to meet guarantee requirements for first year students in 2012-2013, Queen’s renovated the Quinte Thousand Island Lodge (a small building attached to Waldron Tower), and contracted with the Confederation Place Hotel to house graduate students off-campus, releasing residence space in the Graduate Residence on campus for first-year students.

Beds for other constituent groups (returning upper year students, graduate students, exchange, etc.) have been significantly reduced. Currently, there are less than 100 upper-year undergraduate students (other than residence student council members) living in residences, down from over 600 in the mid-2000’s.

Off-Campus Housing

Community Housing

Community Housing provides leased student accommodation, governed by the Residential Tenancies Act, to students living in the community. University-owned apartments and houses offer various living arrangements ranging from single tenant and multi-tenant apartments to family-style units:

• In the downtown core area, 351 beds in 67 properties/112 units – primarily houses and multi-unit residential buildings serving upper-year undergraduate students.
• On West Campus, John Orr Tower contains 124 one-bedroom units and typically houses 160 students, mainly graduate students.
• To the north of West campus, An Clachan complex provides 261 units to 560 upper-year and graduate students and their families.

The department also continues to operate the Accommodation Listing Service, which provides students with a searchable database for available listings and features the ability to refine searches based on particular parameters. The service lists over 5,000 units each year, and receives 1.1M annual hits.

The Landlord Contract Program (LCP) underwent a number of changes in 2010 to ensure continued viability and to maintain the integrity of the program. Participants in the program are afforded prominence on the Accommodation Listing Service and receive discounted advertising rates. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 732 properties were enrolled in the LCP.

In order to transition to revenue generation (from the previous model of self-financing), Community Housing began a process to ensure that all rents were at market. While comparisons in terms of size of unit and general locations are possible in determining best possible rent, “market rent” is simply the amount the individual or group interested in the unit are willing to pay. It’s also important to note that, unlike other community landlords, Community Housing is restricted to renting to students, staff and faculty of Queen’s University.

During the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years, both John Orr Tower and An Clachan experienced vacancies after a number of years of waiting lists for both properties. Community Housing was not unique in this situation. The community (see “The Broader Community” below) also experienced similar challenges.
Based on a recent targeted survey of residents at An Clachan, students (in particular graduate students) note price as an issue driving housing choices. To reduce costs, students are willing to live in greater density (i.e. more people to a unit) – this is particularly true for international students. Prospective tenants have increasingly sought permission to add occupants to the lease beyond the traditional number – for example, four people sharing a 2-bedroom unit.

In order to address the vacancy situation, Community Housing took a number of steps to re-position John Orr Tower and An Clachan in the marketplace.

One of the gaps identified in the marketplace was furnished units on an 8-month lease. The implementation of this strategy (at a premium rent) resulted in a significant decrease to vacancies. Rent levels were also reviewed and adjusted to market rates in response to the surplus of student housing in the community. While financially significant, the vacancies also allowed the opportunity to perform major upgrades to a number of units in both complexes.

As a result of these initiatives, both John Orr Tower and An Clachan are at full occupancy.

**Private Development**

There are a number of larger and smaller housing rental firms operating in Kingston with a focus on student housing. These landlords own and supply a wide range of housing stock, including bedrooms, apartments and full houses, including furnished and unfurnished options. Other amenities, such as free internet, housekeeping and laundry services, are often included within the rental fee.

One local developer, which manages a large number of apartments, townhouses and houses geared to the student population, provides mandatory bi-weekly cleaning of common areas, as well as 24-hour exterior maintenance (e.g. shoveling). A large complex in the downtown area offers a range of lease options, including 4 and 8-month terms, as well as underground parking and a building superintendent. The Student Housing Co-op combines many of their housing options with a meal plan and weekly mandatory kitchen duties for each student.

Recent housing developments point to a trend towards higher-end housing with a greater range of amenities and services, rented by the bedroom. Students share common spaces in the unit with roommates who may or may not be pre-selected.
The Broader Community
On-going City and Queen’s Initiatives

City of Kingston staff continue to work on a number of issues around student accommodation, including:

- Design guidelines
- Heritage designations
- Licensing of residential rental units
- Habitable space in cellars
- Back lot development

In June 2012, the City of Kingston initiated a Central Accommodation Review to focus on the continuing impact of the residential built form, of the intensification process and of the quality of the housing developing in the central area of the city. These ongoing issues are particularly related to accommodating the residential needs of the Queen’s University and St. Lawrence College student body. A follow-up report was submitted to council in April 2013.

In January 2014, the City retained Dillon Consulting Limited to undertake a study to review the City of Kingston’s policies and regulations towards providing amenity areas in multi-unit residential developments within the City. The study will provide background research, analysis and recommendations to the Planning and Development Department to amend existing policies and regulations or implement new policies and provisions towards regulating amenity areas within the City of Kingston.

Additionally, City staff recently delivered a report (June 6, 2013 Planning Committee Meeting) with information about how other similar municipalities in Ontario are regulating the number of bedrooms in residential units. The report includes information on zoning and licensing by-laws in Oshawa, London, Hamilton, Waterloo and Guelph.29

The City also recently released the City of Kingston and County of Frontenac Municipal Housing Strategy final summary report. Although this report primarily focuses on social issues around affordable housing, it also takes into account a lack of diversity in housing in Kingston and Frontenac, and touches on the impact of student housing on other rental groups.30

A number of on-going joint City-Queen’s committees address common issues such as the Quality of Life Working Group and the Near Campus Neighbourhoods Advisory Committee.
Current Market Conditions

As noted earlier, the student housing market in Kingston continues to shift as it has over time. Anecdotally, it appears that the number of students living in the near campus community has increased in the last decade and there are fewer single families living in adjacent areas – for example, streets such as Collingwood have seen a significant increase in student rentals.

There is also evidence that students are willing to live further from campus (for example, in a project at Victoria and Princess and other developments in that vicinity, as well as discussions around Williamsville improvements) but it is likely, given the correct blend of quality and price, there is still a preference to live closer to the campus.

It is difficult to accurately assess the student housing inventory. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports do not include individual homes operating as rental units when reporting vacancies – a unit must be a multi-unit residential building (MURB) of 3 units or greater to be included – resulting in a great deal of student housing for Queens, St. Lawrence College and The Royal Military College being excluded.

While the scatter diagrams included in this report provide some information regarding the supply and dispersion of student housing in the community, because the data is reliant on students providing a local address to the university (it is not mandatory to do so), the diagrams cannot be regarded as an accurate reflection of student housing patterns.

University-owned properties adjacent to the campus have not experienced vacancies (all units were fully rented prior to February 1st, 2014), however a number of landlords who share information with Community Housing report they are experiencing unusual vacancies and are resorting to shorter term leases and other non-standard arrangements.

As examples of current market conditions, two recent groups of students (the MBA program and winter term exchange students) arriving in January of 2014 - a time of year where historically good housing options have been difficult to find - had little or no difficulty finding accommodation.

Without firm numbers, it is difficult to make distinct conclusions about the nature of the changing landscape for student rentals, however university staff have contributed the following observations:

- In September 2012, Royal Military College (RMC) completed construction of their new residence. Growth at the College had resulted in a policy allowing third year students to live off-campus, however new construction resulted in the policy being rescinded. This opened up housing for nearly 300 Queen’s students, mainly in an area bounded by Queen, Raglan, Barrie and Division Streets. The walk to campus is reasonable and the rents are significantly lower than the immediate near campus neighbourhood.
- The neighbourhood between West and Main campuses, particularly in the lower part of streets bordered by College and Albert Streets have become more student intensive. Several single-family homes in this area have been converted to student rentals over the past number of years.
- While there have been a number of larger developments, the construction of several new smaller projects has also influenced the available housing supply – for example, the Kings Town Development at 464 Frontenac Street features compact, stacked townhouses that provide seven 2-bedroom units and fourteen 4-bedroom units. This site alone will absorb more than half the enrollment increase from the 2013/14 academic year.
• The Princess and Victoria Street property project, delayed due to a fire on the construction site, will add 550 beds to the community and is anticipated to be completed by Spring 2015. The building is based on a model of higher density living and high-end services at a reasonable per bed price.

• Second degree and Grad students, especially Law and Medicine, appear to be moving into non-traditional areas. Larger numbers of these students are populating apartments on Leroy Grant Drive. Homestead Land Holdings recently finished a third tower at this location that features a roof-top pool, social space and parking.

• Homestead properties along Queen Mary Road near Bath are capturing student families with walking access to English and French Schools, flexible leases and good access to buses and inexpensive shopping. Many of these units were previously home to students at St. Lawrence College – these students are increasingly moving into converted family homes along Queen Mary and into Polson Park and the Calderwood Ave circle.

• Golden Dragon Ho Inc. is currently building 29 three and four-bedroom units on the former site of five single-unit houses between 637 and 655 Johnson Street (the block bordered by MacDonnell Street and Toronto Street), resulting in an additional 108 beds.

• University Suites is offering ‘rent-ready’ condos at University and Princess streets, with hotel-style furniture packages, property management and guaranteed leasing for three years.

Other recent developments have shifted housing trends for different constituents, opening the door for student housing in units vacated by both former homeowners and renters:

• The Anna Lanes condominiums at Queen and Bagot Streets (to be completed in fall of 2014) offers units primarily to non-student renters. Some are current downtown homeowners; other future occupants are known to be in current rental properties and will be able to take advantage of lower-cost units as part of the project’s mandate to offer a mixed income environment.

• The Tower (Clergy and Queen) features 16 luxury suites in a renovated church – prices for these units begin at $480,000.00.

• 165 Wellington Street offers 11 rented suites in a popular downtown location close to campus – units that may appeal to current homeowners in the downtown core area near Queen’s.

Traditionally Under-Serviced Demographics:

There have historically been a number of under-serviced groups amongst the student population at Queen’s – for example, students requiring one-term accommodation or whose stay at Queen’s is “off-calendar” to typical rental periods may find residences and the university’s leased properties unappealing due to the contract and lease requirements. Options within the community to accommodate these groups include sub-letting opportunities from students wishing to fill out the remainder of a lease, or rental options with groups such as Princess Towers or Science 44 Co-op.

While current market conditions have resulted in options for variable term rentals, the market place will adjust if student housing vacancies decrease.
Student Housing Statistics: Comparison of Like Cities across Canada

There are a number of college towns across North America where a medium to large post-secondary institution resides in a small to mid-sized city. Many of these cities experience similar challenges and opportunities as Queens. A number of earlier reports have developed ‘case studies’ of several of these similar cities with the goal of identifying best practices and guiding intensification and planning strategies, as well as contributing to positive community relationships. Other cities, notably Waterloo, have developed strategies based on ‘best practices’ created by Queens and the City of Kingston.

Generally, the number of students housed within University-owned housing at Queens is the same or higher than most other similar universities. The impact of students on the population of Kingston is fairly average in comparison to other similar-sized institutions.

Queens compares favourably to other institutions in terms of housing students in institution-owned properties (residences and off-campus properties managed by Community Housing).

The student housing issues facing Queens University and the City of Kingston are not unique. Many other “university towns” across North America are currently encountering similar challenges. Most similar in total city population, university population, and geography are Brock University in St. Catherine’s, Ontario and Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York.

The downtown core of St. Catherine’s, Ontario is similar to Kingston in that it contains mainly single-family homes. One of the City’s strategies to facilitate diversification of housing types is to provide financial incentives to stimulate private investment and encourage adaptive reuse of several heritage properties. An example of this was the conversion of a hotel into private studio apartments or shared suite accommodation.31

Brock University has seen success at strengthening the town-gown relationship through their Campus Living Services website, where students and landlords can find information about their rights and responsibilities. Students are mailed Good Neighbour Guides providing information about neighbourhood relations and community resources for students, landlords, and long-term residents.32

Kingston, Ontario and Syracuse, New York also share several characteristics. In Syracuse, the University Hill neighbourhood has a similar built form to that of Kingston’s student housing core in single family or large stately homes built in the early 1900’s. The city has addressed the need for more diverse types of housing in the University Hill neighbourhood by converting larger homes into multi-dwelling building units; housing a larger number of students in smaller, contained units.33
Recent Housing Surveys, Reports and Reviews

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC)

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation publishes a number of quarterly and annual reports regarding various housing trends across Canada. While recent reports have pointed to Kingston having one of the lowest vacancy rates in Canada, it is important to note that the report deals with traditional multi-unit residential buildings/traditional apartments buildings (3+ units) and does not include former single family dwellings that have been converted to rentals – student or otherwise. According to the Housing Market Outlook – Kingston CMA (Fall 2014):

- Rental construction was scaled back in 2014, but is anticipated to rebound in 2015, with higher rents earned on newer units compensating for losses due to vacancies in older units. As of August 2014, the number of rental units under construction (521) was noted as being “well above the ten year average”34
- Kingston’s vacancy rate is forecasted to be 2.8 per cent in 2015 and 2.6 percent in 2016, with certain sub-markets experiencing much lower vacancy rates due to increased demand from students and empty nesters35

Housing Trends:

An environmental scan has revealed a number of on and off-campus housing trends across the country over the past number of years:

On-campus housing trends:

- More apartment-style units
- Shared baths between 2 rooms
- Double beds
- Enhanced security (particularly to meet international student needs)
- Gender-neutral spaces
- Enhanced accessibility
- High-speed wireless internet access
- Common spaces for social activities
- Group work/study areas with technology enhancements (wireless, data projectors, screens, etc.)
- Higher quality furnishings, finishings

Off-campus housing trends:

- Purpose-built student housing
- Rent by bedroom vs. choosing roommates
- Higher quality buildings with amenities
- Greater sharing/density within units to reduce costs
Next Steps

The New Campus Master Plan recommends that the university “prepare a comprehensive housing strategy outlining policy regarding student residences and a plan to guide and support decision making and prioritization for both the short and long term provision for housing for students.” This report provides a solid foundation for understanding the past and current housing environment, with a goal to informing future decision making as the landscape of the campus and city continues to evolve based on the changing needs of many stakeholders.

Consultative work on the university’s housing strategy will begin in 2015.


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32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.


35 Ibid.