



Unionville Residents Association



AUGUST 2017

Priority Community Project Ideas for Unionville

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Upcoming Events

URA Crime Prevention Session

August 14, 2017 (Monday)

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

8700 McCowan Road

York Region Police Station #5

Community Room

URA September Members' Meeting

September 7, 2017 (Thursday)

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

PanAM Centre Community Room

Guest Speaker: John Taylor, NewMarket Deputy Mayor

Theme: Second Suites & Affordable Housing – NewMarket Perspectives

URA has spent considerable effort over the past few years surveying the public and members for community improvement ideas. The catalyst for this has been Council's discussion to make projects selected for funding from Section 37 more transparent. However, it is really secondary to URA whether the funding source (Section 37, gas tax, DCs, tax revenue etc.) is for improvement projects.

In June, we conducted a community survey at our booth at the Unionville Festival and held a members survey at our meeting. We received about 100 responses in total. Full survey results are available upon request. In summary, there was board member and public support for community improvements in three areas:

- Environment, especially trails;
- Transit;
- Public realm and public facilities

Based on this survey information and other consultations, the URA Directors have now developed 5 specific and realistic project ideas listed below:

1. Connect trails north and south of Highway 7 east of Main Street (\$69K)
2. Connect existing trail in Quantztown Park to proceed under GO tracks to a new trail west of Austin Drive Rugby Field to Austin Drive (\$50K study)
3. Conduct Rouge Valley improvements and build new trails in Markham Centre (\$2M+)
4. Pilot test to improve YRT shuttle bus services to Unionville GO (<\$100K pilot)
5. Streetscape plan for Unionville Main Street (\$tbd)

More details on these ideas are available on request.

We welcome member input on these selections. URA will be advocating for these projects, or amended ones, for the 2018 municipal budget.

Changes to GO Transit – a Mixed Bag

On June 24, GO Transit announced major changes affecting Unionville and Markham. Trains to/from Unionville Station would increase from 17 per week day to 35 per week day. Trains proceeding beyond Unionville Station to pass through Markham to/from Stouffville would increase from 14 to 18 per weekday. The increased train service will greatly improve travel time reliability and comfort while representing real progress towards the Regional Express Rail vision of 15 minute all-day two-way service by 2025.



However, there are a couple of downsides:

- The hourly off-peak train service offers less schedule flexibility than the 30 minute off-peak bus service previously in place.
- The last train now passes through Unionville and Markham at 11:00 – 11:30 pm, rather than the previous 8:00 – 8:30 pm. The late train whistle will cause major disruption to thousands of residents. Anti-whistling measures will not be in place until 2018.

URA and Markham Council have both approached Metrolinx to request a schedule tweak advancing the 11:00pm train to an earlier hour, until 2018. However, to date, our requests have not been responded to.

Unionville Home Society Redevelopment

After two years of planning, Minto Communities, York Region and the Unionville Home Society filed a complete application for Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw Amendments in April, to allow redevelopment of the UHS site at 4300 Highway 7. The preliminary staff report was published in June. The application proposes 152 townhouses in the north part of the property currently occupied by Heritage Village bungalows, a 260 unit “affordable rental apartment” for seniors in the middle of the site with building heights of 4, 8 and 11 stories, a community center and seniors hub to replace the current Heritage Centre, and provision for a future expansion of the existing Unionville long term care facility.

The UHS Community Liaison Committee, which includes the URA, met on June 27 to review the proposal and the staff report. Several concern areas and positions were developed. They are as follows:

- Concerned about various transportation and parking related matters. The Committee will review the applicant’s Traffic Impact Study before commenting further.
- Concerned about tree preservation. Referred to staff to pursue.
- Want onsite parkland and in favour of expansion of Anna Russell parkette. Referred to staff to pursue.
- Concerned about construction impacts. Public consultation process requested.
- Outstanding questions and potential concerns with new Community Centre. Referred to staff for more details.

The next Committee meeting will be in mid-September. A statutory public meeting, possibly preceded by a public information meeting, is anticipated in the fall.

The longer term schedule contemplates construction of the seniors building between May 2018 and January 2021. Occupancy of seniors building and relocation of Heritage Village occupants are scheduled to occur in February/March 2021 and construction of the Minto townhouses are set to occur April 2021 to April 2023.

Markham Gardens 150 - Promoting Markham Beauty

The Chinese Canadian Photographic Society of Toronto and Canada-China Realty Professionals Association are hosting a "Happy Life Markham Gardens 150" contest this summer.

The contest will select 150 fabulous gardens in Markham with best use of flowers, colour, trees, landscape and environment. The objective of "Markham Gardens 150" is to promote garden caring while celebrating Canada 150. Mayor Frank Scarpitti and Councillor Alan Ho are the honorary co-chair of this initiative. The title sponsor is Happy Life Wealth Management.

In order to make this project Markham wide, the "Markham Gardens 150" project team has invited the following ratepayers association in Markham to support this project:

- Grandview Area Residents Association
- Aileen Willowbrook Ratepayers Association
- Buttonville Ratepayers Association
- Unionville Residents Association
- South Unionville Resident Forum
- Angus Glen Ratepayers Association
- Aldergrove Ratepayers Association

Happy Life Wealth Management Inc.
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MARKHAM GARDENS 150

Selecting 150 Fabulous Gardens
15 Awards in Markham
Best use of color, flower, tree, landscape, environment

1st prize \$1,000
2nd prize \$600
3rd prize \$400

Open for Nomination

Email : markhamgardens150@gmail.com
Web : <http://www.markhamgardens150.com>

Logos for Canada 150, CCRPA, and MARKHAM.

The Markham Gardens 150 is opened for nomination until August 31st. Submission can be emailed to markhamgardens150@gmail.com. There will be a photo exhibit for the 150 fabulous gardens in Markham Civic Centre late September. The top 15 gardens will be selected by a judging panel with relevant professionals and be awarded in October 2017. For more detail, please refer to the [Markham Gardens 150](http://www.markhamgardens150.com) website or simply email: markhamgardens150@gmail.com

Housing Affordability Public Survey

As members are aware, URA is active on the issue of housing affordability. In 2016, we deputed to Markham Council supporting licensed secondary suites across the city and supporting licensed rooming houses in intensification areas. We conducted a public forum in May with outside experts to identify follow up areas for the URA to push at Regional or Municipal Council meetings. See our June newsletter for details.

To improve our understanding of public sentiment, we conducted a public survey at our booth at the Unionville Festival, with about 80 participants. In summary, 70% of respondents felt the high cost of housing in Unionville/Markham was a concern to

Of the 6 initiatives identified for URA follow up at our forum, there was majority respondent support for 5, as shown in the table below:

Initiative	% Supporting
Allow secondary suites	54
Allow rooming houses in intensification areas	24
Encourage purpose-built rental buildings	60
Encourage more family-sized units in high density condos	70
Require new condo buildings to include affordable housing units	58
Implement vacant house tax	83

York Campus ICE - Innovation and Community Engagement Hub

Since the Speech from the Throne was delivered in September 2016 with Premier Kathleen Wynne advising the Minister of Advanced Education and Skill Development to proceed with the build of York University Markham Campus, much development has taken place with the anticipation of Ontario funding (\$127 million) announced in June 2017. York University has leased 8,000 square feet at 169 Enterprise Drive (the same building as Odeon Cinema) to create a community engagement centre, with the following goals in mind:

1. to facilitate an innovative community by creating corporate partnership to prepare the campus transformation into the York Campus neighbourhood Urban Vitality and Livability
2. to expand research and innovation from idea creation and entrepreneurship to commercialization.

The York University Community Engagement will also serve as a front door for York University before the campus is built by hosting collaborative research projects on Engineering, Osgoode Law School, Environment Studies, Health and Education.

In a housing study conducted in Downtown Markham, South Unionville and Unionville Main Street, there are approximately 652 units or 1,355 beds in the \$800-850/bedroom per month range which is projected to grow to 2,012 units or 4,135 available beds by 2024.



In Downtown Markham, there are 10 buildings identified to have the ability to support student accommodation. The study also anticipates there to be 9 facilities in Downtown Markham to support student life which includes; shops, restaurants and medical service centres. Students will be able to access the PanAm Centre, YMCA, Bill Crothers Secondary School or Rouge Valley Trail facilities for sports, fitness and recreation.

A workshop with Librarians from York University, Seneca College and Markham Libraries was conducted in May 2017 to share views on strategic alignment and potential synergies for a collaborative partnership between York University and Markham Public Library. In the meantime, York University and Markham Public Library have conducted a 5 month Scholar Hub Speaker series in first half of 2017 focusing on how the brain functions while it is in action.

Stay Tuned...

Strengthening Tree Preservation Bylaw

As discussed in our February newsletter, Markham is taking steps to review and strengthen its Tree Preservation Bylaw passed in 2008 (Bylaw 2008-96). Two workshops have been held – in April and July. URA has participated in both, with verbal deputations and written submissions.



Strengthening Tree Preservation Bylaw (cont'd)



To date, we are pleased with many of the preliminary recommendations from staff, including:

- aligning compensation requirements for heritage and non-heritage infill;
- requiring displaying of approved tree permits on front yard;
- collecting application and permit fees;
- collecting securities;
- removing exemption for trees located in proposed building footprint;
- reviewing licensing of tree removal companies and arborists;
- adding a Rebuttable Presumption Clause; and
- Maintaining many of the positive features of the 2008 bylaw

A number of other issues still remain to be acted upon. Based on discussion at the July workshop, staff was directed to conduct:

1. A broad-based public consultation akin to the Parks Renaissance consultation,
2. A third workshop in September and
3. An evening public meeting.

URA will continue to be closely involved.

Update on Secondary Suites, Rooming Houses and STA Short Term Accommodation

A Development Services Committee (DSC) agenda item on 12 June included a motion to allow City staff to prepare a new By-law to allow Secondary Suites in Markham, as mandated by the Province. Staff presented reasons why Secondary Suites should be approved and the Fire Department presented the costs and additional staff required to implement a Bylaw which would require them to inspect and certify them to be safe. URA supported the motion. (It is estimated there are at least 4,000 unregistered units in Markham today.)



The Mayor and Councillors debated the pros and cons for several hours, with supporters and detractors being evenly divided. All arguments, both for and against, had previously been aired at various public meetings, but each Councillor insisted on repeating their view-points, at great length. However, a new unresolved discussion ensued, about how the City would recover the costs involved in administering the registration and inspection of the declared Suites.

Update on Secondary Suites, Rooming Houses and STA (cont'd)

In summary, the below Motions were LOST to a tied vote:

- a. authorize a staff report to be presented to DSC in the Fall 2017 with final recommendations and Bylaws to implement Secondary Suites and
- b. authorize staff to hold a Statutory Public Meeting in Fall 2017 to consider policies for Rooming Houses and Short Term Accommodation (STA)

However, at the General Council Meeting on the following day, the same Councillors, after repeating many of the same opinions from the previous day, voted again on the same motions - which were CARRIED, by one vote.

This part of the Bylaw Project was supposedly "fast-tracked" in December 2015. It will have taken 2 years before the Secondary Suites Bylaw is implemented (assuming it is approved by a divided Council), but no resolution for the known Rooming House and STA issues are in sight.



Update on 47/51 Gainsville Avenue

The application to rebuild the property at this address was once again brought to the Committee of Adjustment (CofA) on June 21, 2017. The developer presented plans for a new 2 story plus roof-top patio, angular design building, which violated the Bylaws in height by 30%, lot coverage by almost 24%, plus significant front, east and west side set-backs. Three local residents, plus URA, spoke in opposition, specifically to the massing of the design, lack of privacy from the patio and comparison to local character of existing housing.

After some challenges to the developer, the CofA voted only 3-2 to DEFER the application. The developer was advised to meet with local residents to address concerns, reduce the height by removing the patio and reduce the proposed floor area of the building. The application will return to the CofA - date unknown.



This case represents a more general concern about the CofA approving major adjustments that really are beyond their jurisdiction. The URA is monitoring all CofA cases in Ward 3 to challenge the CofA's definition of minor adjustment.