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September Meeting

We wish you a great summer and hope to see you all at our September meeting.

Date: Monday September 17th 2018 from 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Venue: Markham Pan Am Center

Address: 16 Main St Unionville, Unionville, ON L3R 2E4

The September meeting will focus on our local arterial road widenings, involving expert speakers on both sides of the issue.

49th Unionville Festival

The URA had a booth at the 49th Unionville Festival on June 2. Again this year, tens of thousands of people from across York Region and the GTA attended this celebration of our unique village. The URA used the opportunity to discuss issues facing Markham with interested patrons of the festival. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see a summary of our findings from two surveys we conducted.

The Festival itself was another great success with fun for all ages, unusual musical and food offerings, and many unique vendors. After a three-year hiatus a spectacular fireworks show ended the Saturday activities. Also new this year, the City closed Main Street on both Friday and Saturday evenings in an attempt to improve safety and crowd control. As a result many more people than usual were attracted to the street and the celebrations continued into both nights. On Saturday night Main Street merchants were able to continue serving patrons long after the closing of the festival itself.

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2019 will mark the 50th annual Unionville Festival. 50 years ago Unionville was almost levelled by bulldozers to make way for the widening of Kennedy Road. The Festival began as a celebration of survival. The Festival organising committee is already working on plans for 2019. If you would like to join in to help organize the best Unionville festival ever, please email the festival at info@unionvillefestival.com.



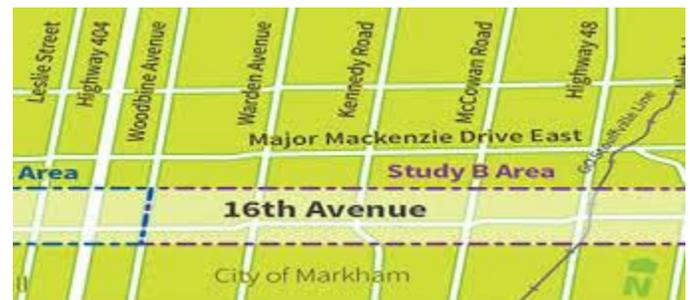
Photo by Chungwai Leung

Arterial Road Widening Remain Controversial – Public Survey Results and Upcoming Focus Session

Members will recall that staff from York Region presented the approved Regional Transportation Master Plan at a URA meeting last November. A significant part of the Plan is the widening of 16th Avenue, Kennedy Road and McCowan Road from 4 lanes to 6 lanes, with the extra two lanes being designated for HOV/Transit during rush hours. The Plan also has improved cycling and pedestrian facilities on all three roads. Road widenings are always controversial, and there was inadequate time at our November meeting to fully discuss the pro/con of these projects. The URA Directors made a commitment to hold a followup focus session specific to this topic.

This session has now been scheduled for **September 17, 2018**. It will involve experts from both sides of the issue in a panel and question/answer session. Stay tuned for more details.

To gauge public sentiment on arterial road widenings, URA conducted a public survey at our booth at the Unionville Festival in early June. Seventy eight responses were received – 26 on each of the three proposed widenings. The responses were similar for all three projects, with 45% favouring widening for general purpose lanes, 30% for HOV/Transit lanes, 15% favouring no widening at all and 10% with other/don't know. Virtually all respondents supported improvements to cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.



With this diversity of opinion, the discussion at the focus session should be very interesting. The URA currently has no official position on these widenings, but may develop one after the session. Plan to be there!

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York Downs Update

The planned date for York Downs to come up at DSC (Development Services Committee) is now June 25th, but, as the application is still in front of the OMB (Ontario Municipal Board) we still don't know what report content we will get from City staff, especially the critical draft plan conditions, which should include the City's development/traffic phasing language. The URA will be submitting a written status update to Council in writing prior to the DSC meeting.

At a public meeting on May 30th we heard a deputation from the Deacons, who own a property adjacent to the York Downs golf course. They hired an independent biologist and came up with a different view of the endangered barn swallow issue. The applicant is still saying that all will be well with the MNR (Ministry of Natural Resources). If the Deacons are correct however the required habitat for the birds could wipe out space for about 500 homes.



The URA status update to Council will include the process issue related to when do we get any substantial content from staff, including the draft plan conditions, the need for development to be phased as traffic capacity allows, and a summary of

the key issues facing the Normandale community, which are:

- There should be a window street with appropriate buffering to run the entire length of the red block between the two Normandale intersections, similar to Kylemore's existing development along the West side of Kennedy Rd going South from Major Mackenzie Drive.
- Limiting the total retail and commercial space to 3700 m² in the mixed use block with similar design principles to the Kylemore plaza at Kennedy and Major Mackenzie.
- Limiting the height of the retail/ commercial mixed use buildings to one story on the front half of the "red block" and two stories on the back half of the block.
- Limiting any grocery store or any other single use retail store to 1500 m².
- Condo buildings in block 20 should be height limited such that no overlooking is possible into any of the homes on Normandale, Ritter and Delhi, and conform with midrise zoning requirements. This means the condo tower building at the south end of the block should not exceed 6 stories.

Council meeting on Housing

A full Council meeting was held on May 29th, 2018 to render their final decisions on the By-laws for the subjects of Rooming Houses, Short Term Accommodations (STAs) and Secondary Suites, following recommendations made at the Development Services Committee.

Council approved the definitions of Rooming Houses, STAs and Secondary Suites as proposed by staff in their May 14th and 22nd, 2018 reports.

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The decisions were to not allow any of these shared housing options "as of right" in Markham.

However, a potential Rooming House operator could apply for a site specific Zoning Change, with all the required notifications, public meetings etc., with the final decision being made by Council.

A potential STA operator would now have to apply for a change to the OP, plus apply for a change to the Zoning Bylaw; at a cost of about \$45,000!

Letters are to be sent to all the STA platforms and known STA operators in Markham, advising them of the Council decision.

Those wishing to add a Secondary Suite to their house would only have to apply to the Committee of Adjustment for approval - as has been happening for the last few years.

There was discussion about why Markham was not complying with Provincial direction to approve Secondary Suites "as of right". The Commissioner noted that this subject would have to come back to Council sometime soon to comply with Provincial direction!

A new proposed Public Nuisance By-law was approved, as written.

There was little discussion about the 200+ Rooming Houses and 7000+ Secondary Suites believed to exist in Markham. Fire Safety and Bylaw Enforcement stated they only respond to complaints and do not have the resources to go looking for illegal housing! It was noted that the City would be using social media and all means possible for public education about the new By-laws, but I don't understand how the existing occupants are expected to react.

We haven't heard the last of these subjects.

Housing Affordability Public Survey Shows Similar Results to 2017 Survey

Housing affordability continues to be a hot topic in Markham and in Greater Toronto. In a related matter, as part of Markham's comprehensive zoning bylaw project, Council and staff have been deliberating on the best approach for three lower cost housing options - secondary suites (e.g. basement apartments), rooming houses and short term accommodation (e.g. AirBnB).

URA has been active in this area since 2016. In May, 2017, we held a major housing affordability forum. In June, 2017, at last year's Unionville Festival, we conducted a public survey. And we have made numerous deputations related to the comprehensive bylaw.

To refresh our data, we conducted an updated survey at the 2018 Festival. The results were very similar to those from 2017, with 5 out of 7 initiatives receiving majority respondent support in both years.

Initiative	% Support in 2017	% Support in 2018
Allow secondary suites	54	57
Allow rooming houses	24	43
Allow short term accommodation	not asked	29
Encourage purpose-built rental buildings	80	79
Encourage more family-sized units in high density condos	70	87
Require new condo buildings to include affordable housing units	58	92
Implement vacant house tax	83	67