



Unionville Residents Association



NOVEMBER 2019

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November URA Meeting

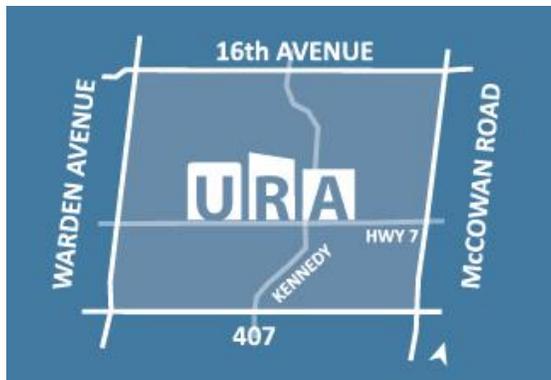
Date: November 4th 2019 (Monday)

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Venue: Markham Pan Am Centre

Topics:

- Unionville Main Street Development (Watford Group’s President and CEO, Harshal Dave, will present plans. See article on page 3.)
- Annual General Meeting



URA Directors Needed

URA’s Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday, November 4. The URA is one of the most active and respected resident associations in Markham. We are seeking additional members to sit on our Board of Directors. Help guide an important organization working on important issues! For further information, contact us at info@unionvilleresidents.ca.



Unionville Residents Association

Together our voice is stronger !!

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Timing of Council Meetings

On Tuesday October 22nd City of Markham GC (General Committee) debated the calendar and timing of Council meetings. Staff proposed that all Council meetings be held in the afternoons, on the basis of it being more effective for staff and councilors, with an option to go to an evening meeting if required. The current format is for alternating meetings, one in the afternoon and the next one in the evening, and so on throughout the calendar year. Committee voted in favour of retaining the status quo by a slim margin of 5 to 4 in order to better provide access to residents. This still has to be ratified at the next Council meeting October 29th stating at 6pm.

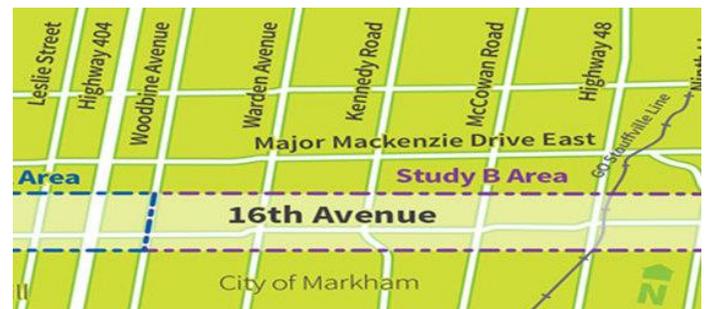
Regional Government Review

In January this year, the Ontario Government announced a sweeping review of Municipal Government with a focus on governance and service delivery. Given the cutting of Toronto Council almost by half that occurred just before the last municipal election there was all sorts of speculation as to what this review might mean for York Region and for the City of Markham. Various forms of amalgamation were understood to be a serious possibility.

The URA presented a deputation to the review panel against any amalgamations that restricted access to democracy at the current local level. In our view, municipal democracy requires access to local councils, staff and indeed other residents. We urged the review panel to consider seriously the geographical and logistical impacts on local democracy and the ability of residents to participate in that democracy, in the event of any amalgamations.

According to a Globe & Mail report on Friday October 25th, Municipal Affairs Minister Steve Clark has announced that instead of acting on a menu of possible sweeping changes, Queen's Park will instead offer up \$143-million for municipalities across the province to find new ways to lower costs and improve services. "Throughout this extensive review, the government heard that local communities should decide what is best for them in terms of governance, decision making and service delivery," Mr. Clark's news release reads. "After careful consideration of the feedback ... our government stands firm in its commitment to partnering with municipalities without pursuing a top-down approach."

So, at this point it appears to remain pretty much status quo. We would however still support a calm and orderly review of any perceived overlaps in service delivery between the City and the Region.



16th Ave Road Widening, York Downs, Markham Roads

On Tuesday October 15th City of Markham DSC (Development Services Committee) debated the following point. "That York Region be requested to re-prioritize the proposed roads capital acceleration projects in Markham by delaying the Highway 404 Mid-Block Crossing North of Major Mackenzie Drive project while accelerating the widening of 16th Avenue further east of Warden Avenue".

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The URA communicated with various staffs and got the following clarifications. There would still not be quite enough funds to pay for 16th Ave widening from Warden to Kennedy within the Region 10-year capital plan, and the time frame is not established. The intersection improvements at 16th and Warden/Kennedy are still in plan to allow for the first phases of York Downs to proceed.

There are many different groups in the City with widely opposing views on the benefits of road widening as a traffic and transit strategy. Rush hour car commuters are one group, the cycling community have their own opinions, the residents from neighborhoods most affected have opinions (not necessarily consistent opinions depending on the time of day they use the roads). There are those who say it's needed to improve traffic which seems to be the current official view, but there are also those who say widen it and it will fill up again quickly anyway. Some point to other communities that have moratoriums on widening but there are also those who support widening to enable HOV and transit lanes. Lots of diverse opinions!

URA members have shown great interest in this topic, but it's clearly more than just a Ward 3 issue. We held a very well-attended workshop last September with local experts but no conclusion was reached, which was not the intent, it was more of an education session with multiple inputs.

Given all the above we would support a city-wide workshop and review on the subject of road widenings, pros and cons, prior to a firm request to the Region. We understand that staff and our Ward Councilor would also be supportive, so the URA made a deputation in support of holding such a workshop. It is likely to be held in early November.

Development Proposal on West Side of Unionville Main Street

As members recall, the Unionville Main Street Vision Plan approved by Council contemplated residential units on the west side of the street behind the existing heritage commercial buildings. The 14-unit condo project at 206 Main, currently under construction, is the first embodiment of this vision.

A much larger project, by Watford Group, has been in the works for several years now. Watford now owns 6 properties on the west side and has the parking lot portions for 2 others under contract, between 160 and 194 Main. Development applications are being filed this week.

URA representatives have met with Watford Group several times since 2017. Previous plans involved a mixture of high-end retail, boutique hotel and about 70 residential units. However, these concepts appear to have changed in the most recent plans. Watford Group's President and CEO, Harshal Dave, will be speaking to URA members at our meeting on November 4.



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Single Use Plastics – A World and Canadian Problem Ban

Plastic pollution, particularly marine plastic, has been identified by environmentalists around the world as the second most important issue after greenhouse gas emissions. As of end of May 2019, there are 64 countries around the world that have imposed a charge or ban on single use plastic shopping bags. Lightweight plastic bags are made of low-density polyethylene plastic which uses non-renewable resources and poses a waste disposal issue with many bags ending up as litter in streets, rivers and oceans.

According to Loblaw's Corporate Social Responsibility Report 2017, there has been a reduction of 11 billion plastic bag usage in Canada since the inception of plastic bag charges in 2007. Despite retailer success on plastic bag reduction, Canada continues to use 3 billion plastic bags every year with 90% or 3 million tonnes of plastics ending up as landfill. Toronto alone consumed 215 million plastic bags every year with 22 million pounds of plastic contamination in the five great lakes.

Toronto attempted to ban plastic bags in 2012 but backed down when facing legal challenges from the Ontario Convenience Store Association and Canadian Plastic Bag Association. The argument was that a bag charge would produce the same effect as a ban with additional revenue that could be appropriated to the environmental protection effort.

Montreal banned plastic bags in June 2018 and disallowed not only lightweight sub- 50-micron plastic bags easily blown in the wind but also oxo-degradable, oxo-fragmentable, oxo-biodegradable and biodegradable bags which produce more contaminated microplastics. The ban exempts plastic film for food safety. Heavyweight plastic bags are still allowed, which defeats the goal of reducing plastic

bag usage. Montreal is now looking into banning single use plastic in 2020.

Vancouver, being the home of Greenpeace, the Green Party and the David Suzuki Foundation, passed legislation to ban single use plastic by June 2019. The ban was relaxed to April 2020 for polystyrene takeout containers and disposable coffee cups. The delay is a result of pressure from the business sector with a further delay on plastic straws beyond April 2020. Biodegradable clamshell take-out containers are 20 cents more expensive and retailers need more time to be in compliance.



Starbucks in Vancouver will do a pilot test for a greener coffee cup and strawless lid in preparation for a worldwide ban on plastic straws. Bubble tea shops have not been able to figure what to replace the plastic straw with.

Ontario has consulted on plastic waste reduction as part of its Made-in-Ontario-Environment Plan, with a focus on improving recyclability and extended producer responsibility. It is unclear whether Ontarians will be supportive, but it is conceivable that the business sector will be more resistant than in Vancouver. Plastic disposition continues to be a challenge in Ontario with only 11% of plastics recycled today. The current recycling processes do not support plastics well and need a national strategy of plastic disposal.

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Federal Minister of Environment Catherine McKenna and the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment announced a Canada-wide zero plastic waste strategy in November 2018 with the aim to reduce plastic waste by 30% in 2030, 50% in 2040 and 100% by 2050. The strategy will require provinces to set extended producer responsibility legislation for plastic manufacturers to develop processes to dispose the plastic.

Markham is doing quite well with 85% waste diversion and recycling textile is one of its better efforts. However, Markham continues to lack capability in plastic disposal. The motion by Regional Councillor Jack Heath (see subsequent article) is definitely a step forward in line with provincial and federal direction in plastic waste management.

Markham's Motion on Single Use Plastic Ban

Richmond Hill Councillor David West moved at the end of May to instruct Richmond Hill staff to study ways to reduce single use plastics including plastic bags, straws, cutlery, water bottles, coffee cups, stirrers, take-out containers and plastic bags. The City of Markham followed Richmond Hill's path and a motion to ban most single use plastics was brought forward by Regional Councillor Jack Heath seconded by Councillor Reid McAlpine at General Committee October 22nd, 2019 Meeting.

Councillor McAlpine advises that "The declaration on single use plastics was sent back to staff for a quick report. There was broad support on the intent, but lots of questions on the details, and the balance of carrots and sticks."

