



MARKHAM CENTRE SECONDARY PLAN UPDATE

Vision Report

October 2020



The City of Markham has retained a multidisciplinary team to undertake the Markham Centre Secondary Plan Update. The team is led by Gladki Planning Associates, supported by DTAH, Greenberg Consultants, Stantec and Steer Group.

gladki
planning
associates

dtah

Greenberg
Consultants
Inc.



Stantec

steer



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is a Secondary Plan?

1.2 Why are we updating the Markham
Centre Secondary Plan?

1. Introduction

Markham Centre is a vital part of the Markham community.

The City of Markham has initiated a review of the Secondary Plan that guides growth and development in Markham Centre.

Markham Centre is envisioned to be the vibrant, mixed-use urban core of Markham and is expected to be the City's downtown, serving all of its many communities. It is a large area (494 ha) roughly bounded by Highway 7, Kennedy Road, Highway 407, and the Beaver Creek Valley, with some additions north of Highway 7 and east of Kennedy Road.

This document establishes a Vision and Guiding Principles for the Markham Centre Secondary Plan update based on our analysis of existing conditions and consultation with the public to date.

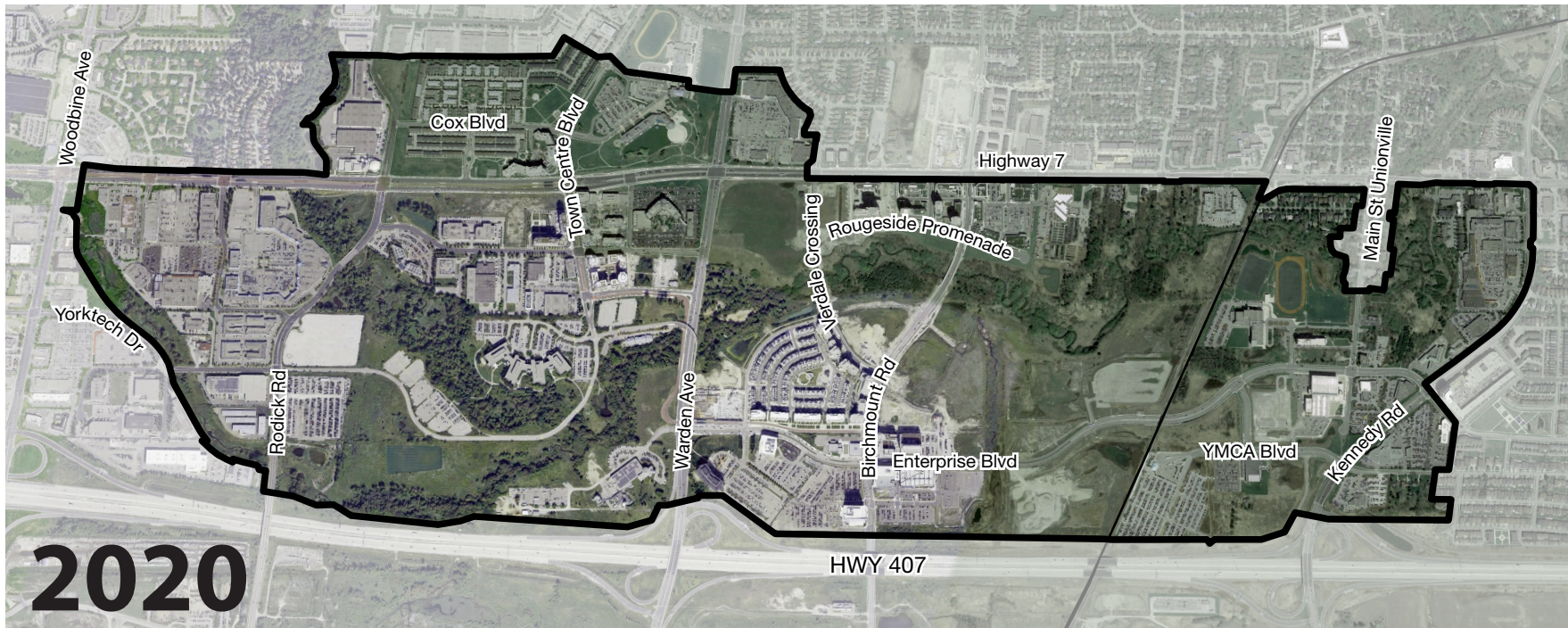
1.1 What is a Secondary Plan?

A Secondary Plan is a tool that guides change in a particular area of the city through detailed policies promoting compatibility and coordination among buildings and development, parks and public spaces, transportation, community services and facilities, and land use.

1.2 Why are we updating the Markham Centre Secondary Plan?

In the 1990s, a Secondary Plan was created for Markham Centre to guide the area's evolution from mostly farmland to a community with homes, shopping, recreation, transportation, and entertainment: Markham's downtown. Sites in Markham Centre continue to develop, adding more people, jobs, and activity.

We are updating the Secondary Plan and expanding its boundaries so future growth is in sync with public improvements needed to support visiting, living, working, and playing in the area. Property owners and the City of Markham will use the new Secondary Plan for the next 20-30 years to guide their decisions about where different uses (e.g., residential, employment, commercial/retail, institutional, etc.) should be located, how tall/big the buildings should be, and which community amenities (e.g., parks, schools, community centres, day cares, libraries, hospitals, etc.) are needed.





2. MARKHAM CENTRE IN EVOLUTION

- 2.1 Original Secondary Plan**
- 2.2 Development Success and Public Investment**
- 2.3 Broader Planning Policy Catches Up**
- 2.4 Current Development Pressures**

2. Markham Centre in Evolution

2.1 Original Secondary Plan

The Secondary Plan for the Central Area Planning District, passed by Council in 1994 and approved by the OMB in 1997, was the foundational planning document for Markham Centre. Based on the principles of “New Urbanism,” the plan fostered a vibrant and intensive urban core to serve as the focal point for the city (at that point still a Town), unifying its many communities. Key themes included:

- Creating a complete community with a mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, employment, open space, and recreational, cultural, and institutional facilities.
- Balancing jobs and population to ensure economic dynamism and foster an area animated by activity around-the-clock and throughout the week.
- Promoting housing variety through a range of housing types and densities.
- Using community, cultural and institutional facilities as anchors to reinforce the role of the Town Centre as a community focal point.

- Creating urban form to support a multimodal transportation system that maximizes trips taken by walking, cycling, and transit.
- Prioritizing the public realm and creating a functional, accessible, connected, and aesthetically pleasing place and dynamic and animated urban environment.
- Treating the Rouge Valley as the heart of the community and open space system.
- Preserving and enhancing natural heritage features within an open space system.

The goals and objectives established by the plan have stood the test of time and remain relevant today. They are an important point of departure in considering the area’s future evolution.



Image 2.1 The Conceptual plan for a new downtown, prepared for the Town of Markham by a multi-disciplinary team of consultants led by NORR Partnership and Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk Architects.

2.2 Development Success and Public Investment

Over the last 25 years, precinct plans, development approvals, site plans, transportation network improvements, public realm plans, and environmental assessments have refined the community structure and neighbourhood character established by the original plan.

Markham Centre has been remarkably successful in attracting a mix of uses in a variety of built form. Major public investments have also transformed the area and its potential, and include the Unionville GO Station, Viva Rapidway, and Pan Am Centre.



Image 2.2, 2.3 Major public investments like the Viva Rapidway and Pan Am Centre contribute to Markham Centre's transformation.

2.3 Broader Planning Policy Catches Up

In many ways, the original Secondary Plan was at the leading edge of the planning of its day. The goals and objectives it established are now thoroughly a part of mainstream conceptions of good planning. They are enshrined in the provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This plan places Markham Centre in a network of Urban Growth Centres and Intensification Areas, with a supporting framework of planning policies around them, including density targets. This provincial planning policy direction is applied and further elaborated in the York Regional Official Plan and the Markham Official Plan.

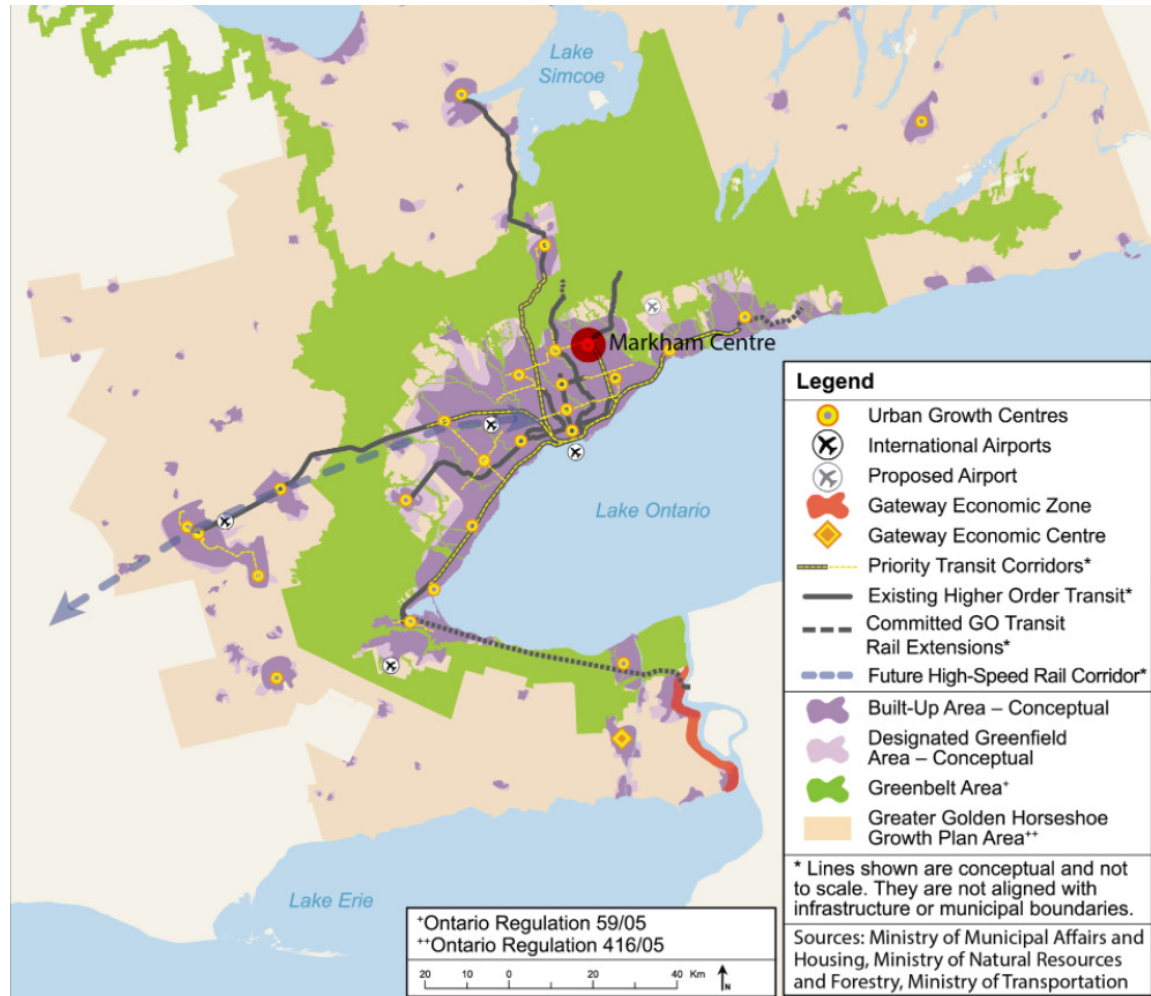


Image 2.4 Provincial policy designates Markham Centre as an Urban Growth Centre, planned to be a focal area for commercial, recreational, cultural, and entertainment uses, a high-density employment centre, and population and employment growth.

2.4 Current Development Pressures

Markham Centre and the region that surrounds it have evolved, and so have development pressures. Recent applications represent intensities of development not contemplated during the creation of the original plan. With these pressures comes incredible opportunity to advance the Markham Centre project. The current Secondary Plan update will re-establish a vision for the future evolution of Markham Centre and set a policy framework designed to respond to present and future opportunities and development pressures.



Image 2.5 Rendering of proposed Markham Square One development



Image 2.6 Rendering of proposed Downtown Markham: HS2 development



Image 2.7 Rendering of proposed Downtown Markham: K2 development



Image 2.8 Rendering of proposed Lifetime Developments (Panda) development



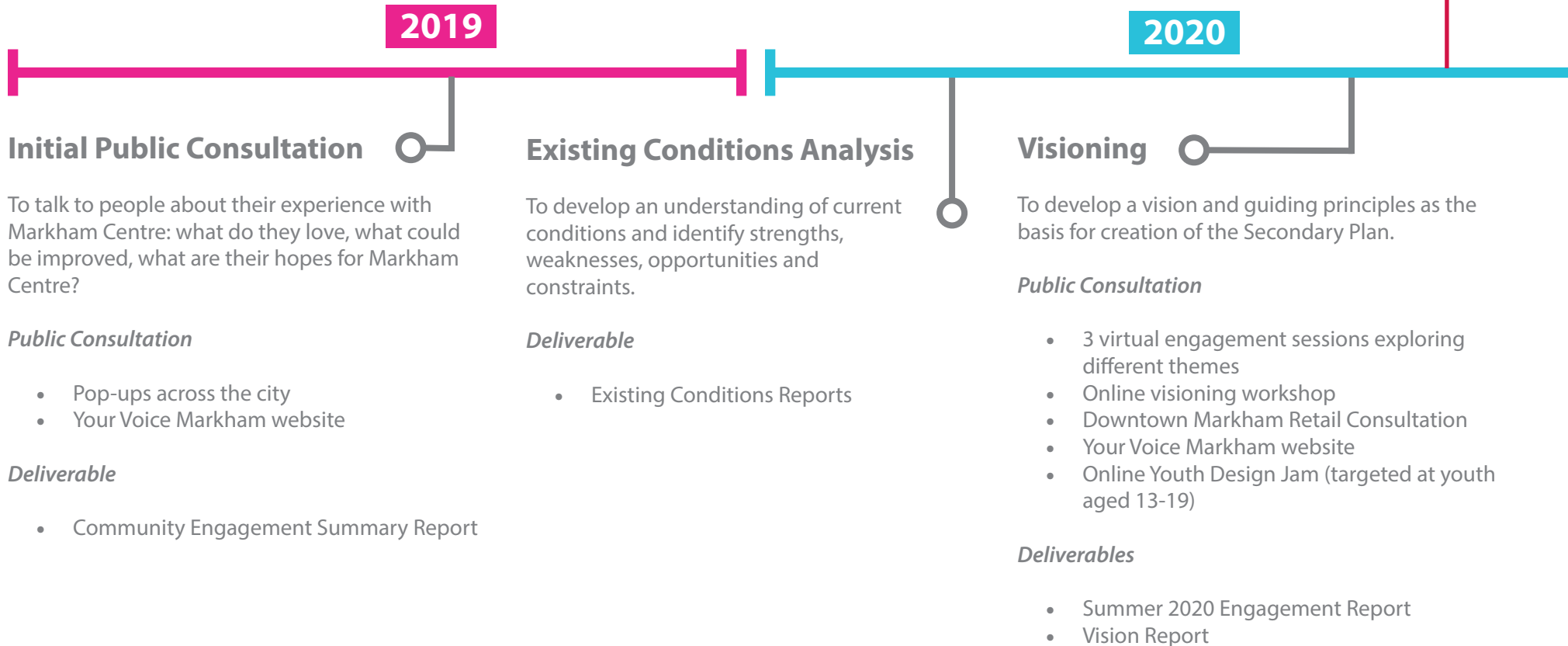
3. OUR PROCESS

- 3.1 Initial Public Consultation**
- 3.2 Existing Conditions Analysis**
- 3.3 Visioning**
- 3.4 Development Options**
- 3.5 Development Concept**
- 3.6 Secondary Plan**

3. Our Process

Markham Centre is for everyone - and everyone has a role to play in mapping its future.

The process to update the Markham Centre Secondary Plan is a public one. The entire Markham community will have an opportunity to provide direction and feedback at critical junctures during the update process. Below are the Secondary Plan update’s main phases and the opportunities for the public to participate in each.





Development Options

To explore different ideas for the future of Markham Centre, including variations on built form, height and density, land use, parks and open spaces, community amenities, and transportation networks.

Public Consultation*

- Focus groups
- Pop ups in well-frequented locations (e.g., YMCA, libraries)
- Public open house
- Your Voice Markham website

Deliverables

- Development Options
- Options Consultation Summary

2021

Development Concept

To develop and refine a preferred development concept based on the feedback on options.

Public Consultation*

- Public open house
- Your Voice Markham website

Deliverable

- Draft Development Concept Report

2022

Secondary Plan

To produce the Secondary Plan for Markham Centre to brought into force through an amendment to the Markham Official Plan.

Public Consultation*

- Statutory public meeting
- Your Voice Markham website

Deliverable

- Markham Centre Secondary Plan

**Future public consultation approaches will be determined based on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to use virtual platforms rather than in-person events.*

What do you love about Markham Centre today?

I Love drawing

Movies!!

Leading the way to a greener community
Thanks

What could be improved in Markham Centre?

Bus schedule to be posted at the Bus Stops.

Pushing to a higher level

4. WHAT WE HEARD

- 4.1 Interactive Summer Sessions
- 4.2 Youth Design Jam
- 4.3 Visioning Workshop

4. What We Heard

4.1 Interactive Summer Sessions

In keeping with Public Health's recommendation of physical distancing and to prevent the spread of COVID-19, all in-person public engagement was adapted to online formats. During summer 2020, we held a series of virtual interactive discussions for stakeholders and members of the public. Nearly 200 people actively participated in small-group discussions in private breakout rooms. Many others listened live on YouTube or viewed the recordings. Attendees included residents, developers, land owners, and Council members.

At our first virtual meeting, we asked participants how they would describe Markham Centre today to someone who has never been. We heard that Markham Centre:

- Covers a large area that feels spread out and disjointed
- Is a vibrant place that is growing
- Has a vast amount of vacant land, with lots still to be developed
- Is car-centric and difficult to walk around or cycle
- Contains places to live and work, but not enough places to play
- Has lots of cool, unique public art
- Contains a mix of uses and the opportunity to build on them

We also asked how community members would like to describe Markham Centre in 10 or 20 years:

- A complete community that is unique and distinctly Markham
- A meeting place: year-round destination with a mix of uses (e.g., shopping, restaurants, recreation, affordable housing, public/civic square that can hold events, festivals, sports game screenings)
- Walkable and human-scale environment where kids can walk or bike to school
- Environmentally-friendly and green, with ample parks, street trees, trails, playing fields
- Seamless mobility choices (e.g., walk, bus, bike, drive) with good connectivity
- Workplaces should be within walking distance to the GO station





Our next interactive discussion explored Markham Centre as Markham's downtown. Participants told us these were the ingredients of a great downtown:

- An area that is active from day to night on both weekdays and weekends
- Multiple cores, all with a sense of community
- Not just retail and residential development, but a mix of uses: attractions, recreation, entertainment, employment, dining, education
- Walkable and connected to transit
- A central civic plaza/square for all ages and family sizes that can host events and celebrations
- Public amenities like libraries and community centres at both small and large scales
- Landmarks, public art, and cultural elements
- Safe, all-season walkability, especially in winter
- Laneways and small alleyways that are protected from cars and provide a sense of discovery
- Car parking concentrated underground or in structures (no large surface lots)

Together, we looked at a map of Markham Centre divided into precincts. We asked participants to describe each of these "character areas," what is missing, and if there is a clear neighbourhood in which the downtown core should be located. We heard that:

- Many character areas are missing a variety of uses
- Neighbourhoods within Markham Centre feel disconnected right now and need to be linked and cohesive
- Markham Centre's downtown core would best be located near the GO station and have a mix of uses for all-day activity
- Public amenities like libraries, community centres, and civic squares for gathering and events are needed



Picking up where we left off at our previous meeting, we asked participants what ingredients were needed to make a great neighbourhood in each of Markham Centre's distinct character areas. We heard lots of ideas, like locating a school in a mixed-use building, adding child care centres, and facilitating attractive streetscapes on Highway 7 through retail frontages. Participants emphasized the importance of 24-hour communities animated at all times of day through a diversity of commercial, employment, residential, civic, and recreational uses.

We then asked how Markham Centre's character areas could be better connected. The community told us:

- The Rouge River Tributary provides natural cross connections from east to west
- There is opportunity to use bike and walking trails/paths to connect areas of Markham Centre
- The downtown core can serve to connect and link other anchor areas

We heard that Markham Centre needs to be better connected between its neighbourhoods. We asked community members, "What would make you prioritize walking and cycling in Markham Centre?"

- A complete cycling network with adequate infrastructure: protected bike lanes, multi-use trails, secure bike parking at key destinations, facilities in buildings, bikeshare system, etc.
- Walkways and bike paths linking the GO station to Viva Rapidway
- A clearly-defined network of trails and pathways through the Rouge River Tributary
- Year-round, all-season accessibility and maintenance
- Wide sidewalks, seating areas, shaded trees, ample lighting, accessible public washrooms



4.2 Youth Design Jam

Youth aged 13-19 were asked, "How might we create more enjoyable and functional public spaces to attract young people to live, work, and have fun in Markham Centre?"

In small groups, 16 attendees pitched ideas for:

- Social gathering spaces (e.g., public plazas, seating, libraries) for people of all ages
- Active transportation infrastructure (e.g., bike lanes, walkways, pedestrian-only streets, GO-YRT integration)
- Public art (e.g., interactive installations, graffiti art, landmark "Markham" sign) and cultural events/performances
- Access to nature and greenery for outdoor sports and exercise
- More residential and commercial development (e.g., retail stores, diverse food choices, age-friendly housing)

Youth Engagement Session: Jamboard





4.3 Visioning Workshop

Taking into account community feedback and our analysis of the area's current conditions, strengths, challenges, and opportunities, we developed a draft Vision and Guiding Principles for Markham Centre. These were shared with the public at a virtual Visioning Workshop.

Community members told us:

- The Vision should be specific to Markham Centre's identity
- Sustainability needs to be included as an area of focus
- Policies are needed to incentivize businesses to locate in Markham Centre
- Markham Centre needs to be reflected as both a destination and a home
- A variety of built form heights are needed
- There is limited diversity of housing options in Markham Centre

We also polled attendees about the issues most important to them as we develop options for the future of Markham Centre (see pg. 27). With feedback from the public and City staff, the Vision and Guiding Principles were refined to serve as the basis for creation of the Secondary Plan. They are included in Sections 6 and 7.



DRAFT VISION

Markham Centre is Markham's Downtown.

It is the heart of the city. As the centre of civic life and a hub of activity, it draws people from across Markham and the region to live, work, learn, recreate, and participate with pride in the Markham community.

As a complete community, Markham Centre consists of a healthy and vibrant mix of uses that enables people to meet their daily needs locally and within convenient walking distances.

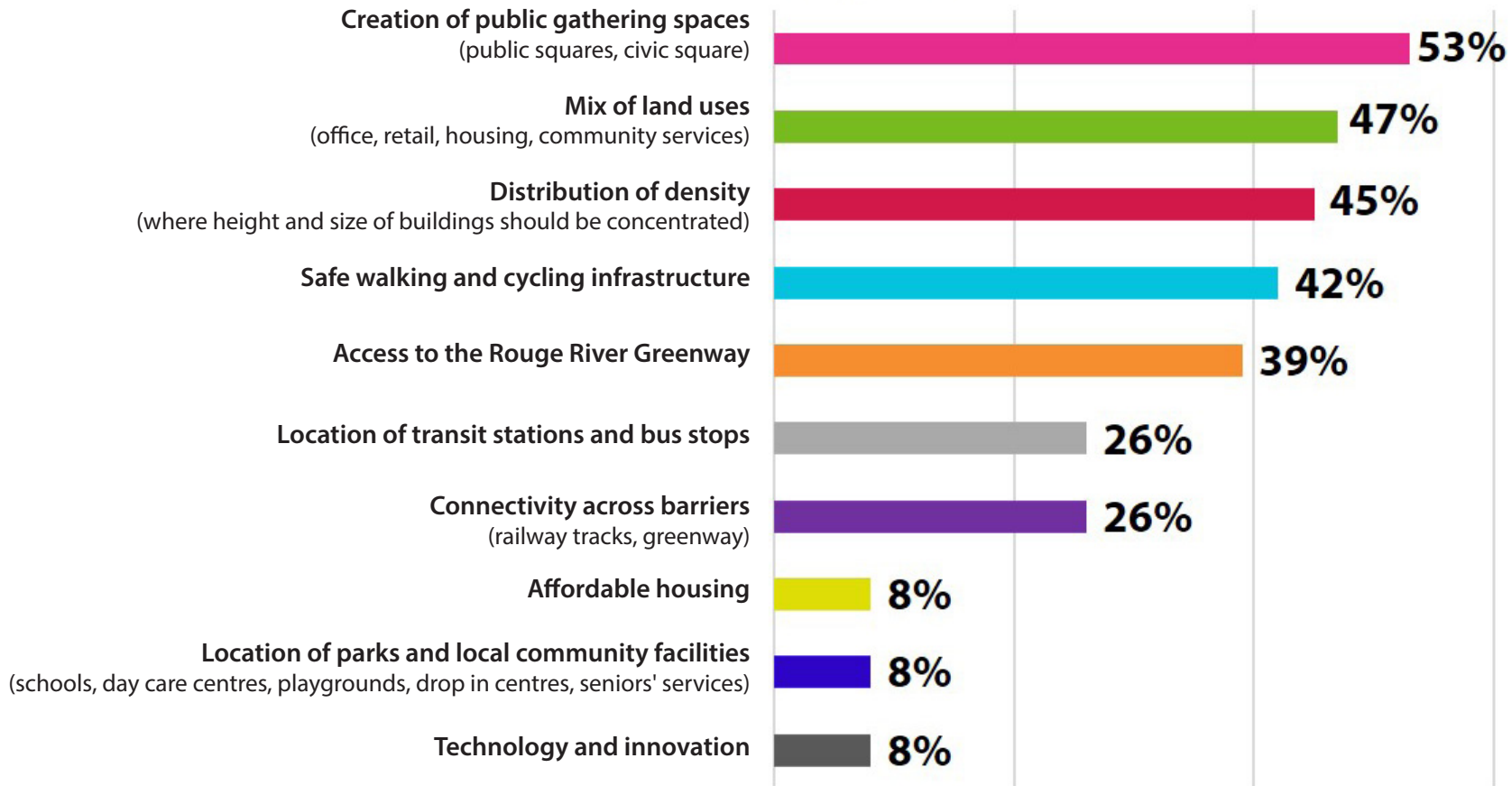
Markham Centre's diverse parts come together to create an attractive and vibrant place, a place with a distinct sense of identity, a place where people want to be.



DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a place that is the heart of Markham 2. Support a diverse and prosperous economy 3. Support arts, culture, and recreation 4. Create an efficient and safe transportation system 5. Create a great public realm | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Build neighbourhoods with access to all the things needed for daily life 7. Realize the full potential of the Rouge River Valley as an environmental and placemaking feature 8. Plan for inclusive neighbourhoods 9. Innovate 10. Lead while remembering |
|--|---|

As we move from visioning to developing options for the future of Markham Centre, what issues are most important to you? Select up to 3.





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5. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- 5.1 Concentrating the focus on a downtown area**
- 5.2 Anchoring the downtown with civic institutions and public amenities**
- 5.3 Intensifying a Mobility Hub**
- 5.4 Realizing the potential of the greenway**
- 5.5 Creating "fifteen minute" neighbourhoods**
- 5.6 Making the active way the default mode of movement**
- 5.7 Building an identity with placemaking and the public realm**

5. Opportunities and Challenges

Consultations with the public, stakeholders and staff, as well as an analysis of existing conditions, have identified major opportunities present for Markham Centre, as well as some of the challenges that might be faced in their realization.

5.1 Concentrating the focus on a downtown precinct

Markham Centre covers a large area but is divided into well-defined sub-areas by natural heritage features, major arterials, and the rail line. These neighbourhoods will play different roles as parts of the larger whole.

Rather than dissipating the activities and amenities of a downtown throughout the entire Markham Centre area, these could be concentrated in a central area serving as a city-wide focal point. A great mix of uses, incorporating offices, entertainment uses, residences, community amenities, retail and services, will bring people to the area for many different reasons and give them more reasons to stay.

Challenges

- Current applications demonstrate an interest in increased heights and densities in many different parts of Markham Centre. The

Secondary Plan needs to reinforce an urban structure that includes a hierarchy of heights, densities, and uses.

5.2 Anchoring the downtown with civic institutions and public amenities

Participants in consultations to date expressed a strong desire that Markham Centre be Markham's meeting place. Creating a vibrant downtown takes a mix of public and private uses. In order for Downtown Markham to become a focal point for all of Markham, it should become home to activities and amenities that draw the entire community to the area.

Civic institutions and public amenities have a large role to play. Potential big moves include:

- Relocating Markham Civic Centre to the Downtown area and co-locating it with other public amenities, including an urban square or area-defining park.
- Locating facilities such as a central library and/or performance venue with a city-wide draw.

These public uses would serve as important anchors in the heart of Markham Centre and be well-accessed by public transit, contributing to the vitality of the area to create dynamism and activity throughout the day and week.

Challenges

- The relocation of the Markham Civic Centre is a "big move" which, although financially viable, may require a mental shift that is difficult to make.
- At present, planning for community facilities in Markham Centre is largely for local-serving rather than City-serving amenities. A change in approach would be required to fund amenities in the downtown that serve as a draw for the whole Markham community.
- Employment uses are also an important anchor for a downtown. Although there have been great successes attracting employment uses to Markham Centre, the current development pipeline is heavily weighted to residential. Attracting significant employment to the area will be a challenge given demand for high parking rates in the suburban office market.

5.3 Intensifying a Mobility Hub

The planned expansion of service and intersection of higher-order transit in Markham Centre is an incredible asset. However, the current GO station area follows a traditional suburban model: large surface parking lots meet the needs of a downtown-Toronto-oriented commuter service. Linkages, especially those that encourage walking or cycling, are not strong.

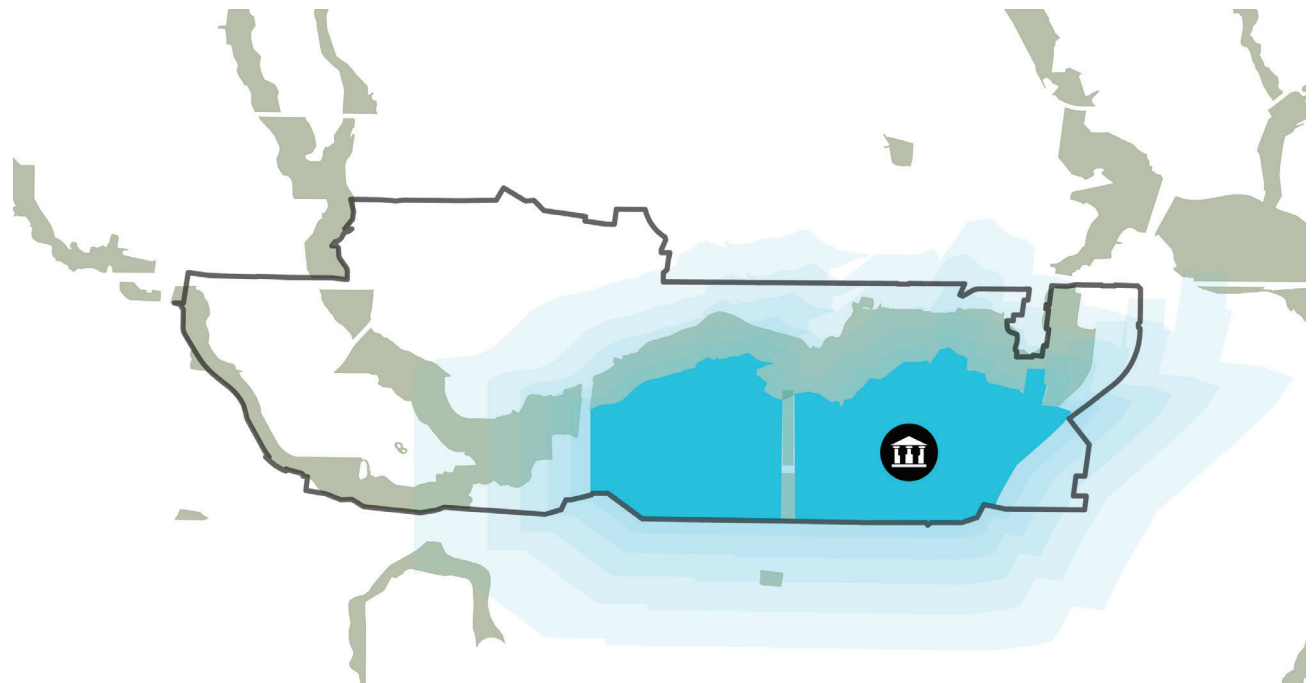
As higher-order transit service becomes more frequent and multi-directional, the station area has the potential to shift from a suburban model to an urban one. This could create a Mobility Hub serving as a destination as well as an origin, with connections throughout the GTA. The Mobility Hub area is an obvious location for the greatest mixing of uses and highest densities, with the removal of surface parking from the immediate vicinity. Connections to and from the Mobility Hub to the rest of Markham Centre and beyond are critical in realizing the greatest potential benefit of this amenity.

Challenges

- Planning and implementing transit infrastructure that will anchor the Mobility Hub involves multiple stakeholders: the City of

Markham, York Region, York Regional Transit, Metrolinx, and the Ministry of Transportation. Coming to a timely consensus on transit infrastructure alignment and its relationship to surrounding land uses is a significant challenge.

- The timing of enhanced transit service is uncertain (e.g., fifteen-minute two-way all-day GO rail service, 407 transitway).



5.4 Realizing the potential of the greenway

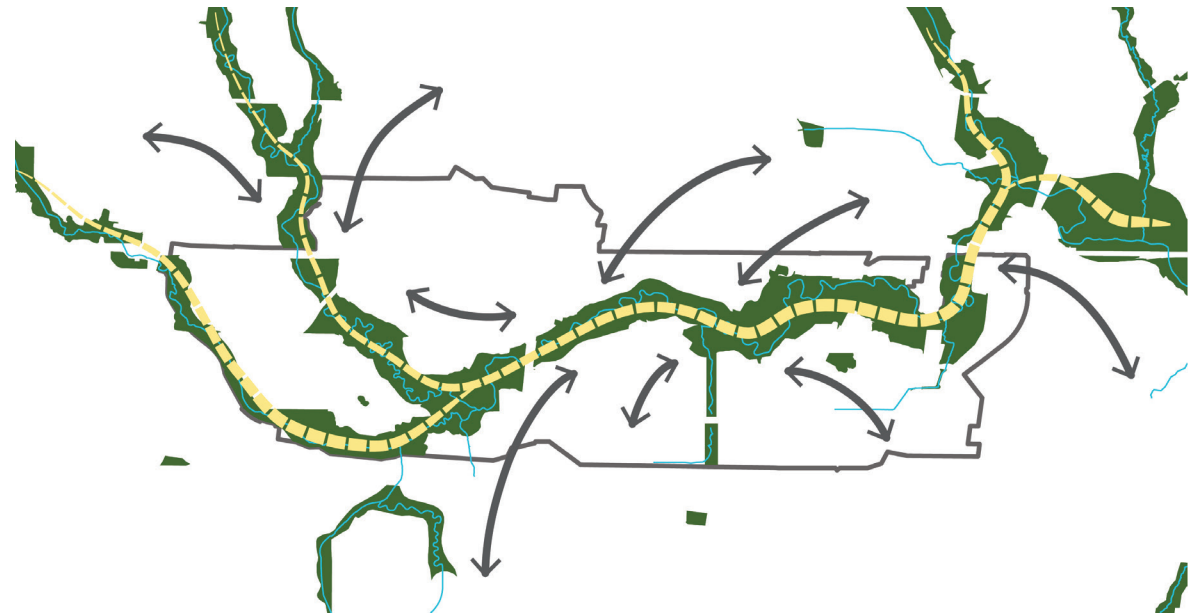
The greenway formed by the Rouge River and its tributaries is one of the most pronounced features of Markham Centre. It is an untapped resource and, at present, serves as a barrier in connecting Markham Centre’s neighbourhoods.

The greenway can be used as a central amenity and community connector. It has the potential to serve as:

- The core of an active transportation network through the addition of trails and river crossings.
- The spine of a parks, open space, and public realm network that supports the orientation of the community towards this natural amenity and locates public facilities and community uses to be accessed from it.
- An important reference point in the orientation of surrounding built form.
- A protected and valued natural asset to be enhanced and restored as a sustainable and biodiverse greenspace within a highly urbanized setting.

Challenges

- Great care will be required to strike the right balance in the greenway between providing an amenity for an intensely urban place, recognizing the hazardous characteristics of water courses to ensure safety and protecting natural heritage features, functions and significant species.



5.5 Creating "fifteen minute" neighbourhoods

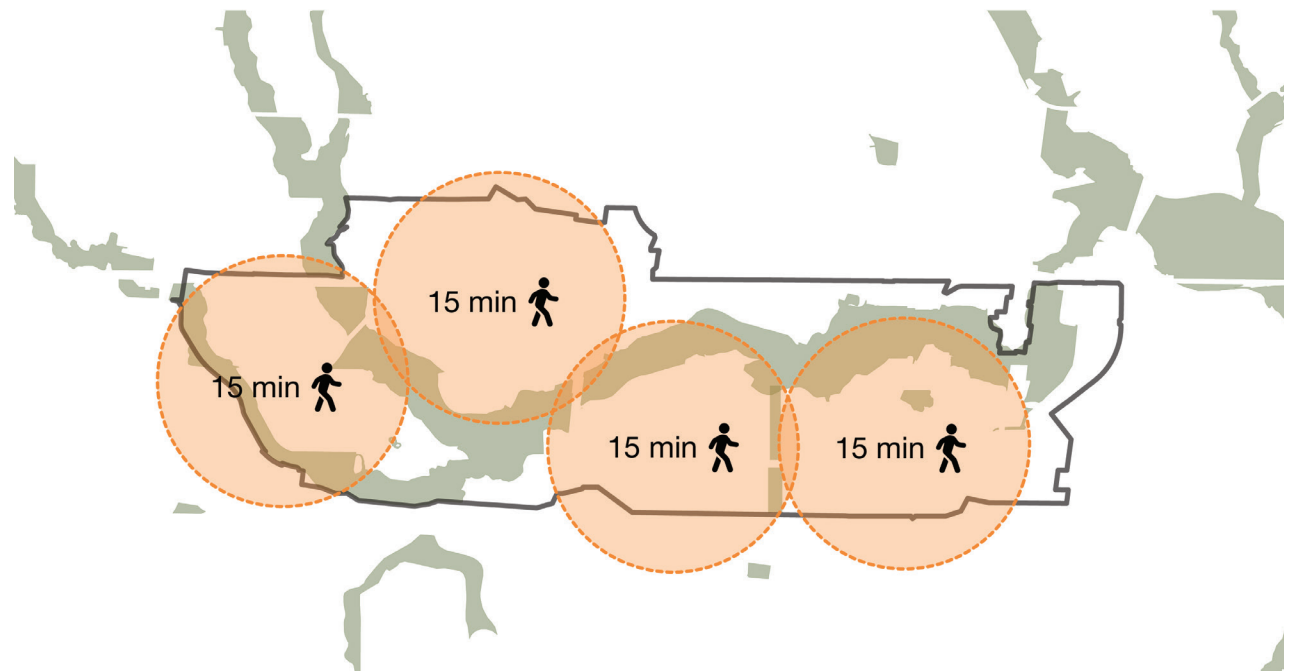
"Fifteen Minute" neighbourhoods are places where people have easy, convenient access to many of the places and services they use on a daily basis, including grocery stores, restaurants, schools, and parks, without relying heavily on a car. This is as important for workers as for residents. Markham Centre's well-defined sub-areas can each be a self-sustaining neighbourhood at a walkable scale that connects into and forms part of a greater whole.

As important as it will be to have city-serving amenities that draw people to Markham Centre, it is equally important that local communities have access to local amenities. There are opportunities to provide these amenities at community hubs or combined with high-density, mixed-use development.

Challenges

- Markham Centre has had success in attracting retail businesses of all sizes. As commercial plazas and big-box stores redevelop, care needs to be taken to ensure a good retail provision remains in the area.

- Residents should have access to retail within walking distance of their homes, and small-scale retail animating street frontages is particularly vital to creating dynamic neighbourhoods. The implications of the current pandemic on this retail model have yet to be fully realized.



5.6 Making the active way the default mode of movement

The private automobile is the overwhelming choice for how people get to, from, and around Markham Centre today. Although there is a solid foundation on which to build in terms of people walking for short trips, cycling as a way of getting around is negligible. Even major tweaks to the transportation system will be inadequate in realizing major change. What is required is the creation of an urban environment that overwhelmingly signals getting around by walking and cycling is the norm, not the exception. Consultations to date have shown that there is an appetite for having more choices about how to get around a well-connected Markham Centre.

Many of the opportunities above address how to make Markham Centre a better place to get around by walking, cycling and transit: providing access to excellent transit service; building neighbourhoods where there are many destinations within walking distance; and creating safe, attractive, and comfortable spaces. All of these can work to facilitate safe, efficient, and convenient movement. as well as the following:

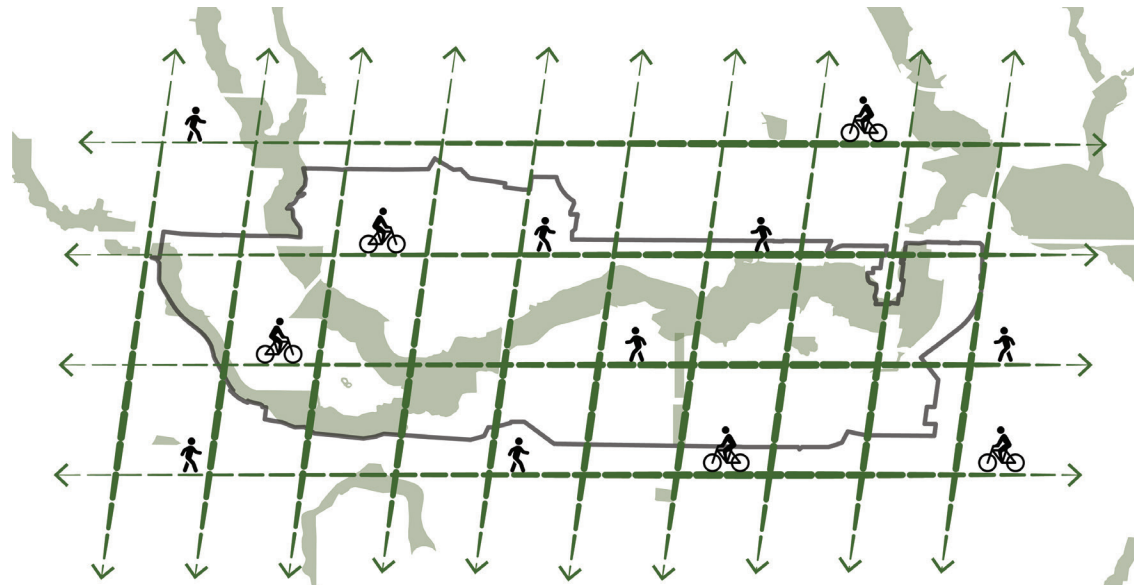
Complete Streets – Designing streets for all users and with an emphasis on the quality of the public realm can be a key principle in the evolution of Markham Centre. Street and intersection design need to prioritize pedestrian and cyclists if people are going to be convinced to get out of their cars.

Variety – Different routes can create different experiences for mobility through the area: along the greenway (off-road, quiet, recreational, experience nature) and along streets (fast, direct, experience urban activity).

Scale and grain – The scale of urban environments designed for pedestrians is different from that of drivers. Markham Centre can establish a finer-grained urban fabric through street networks, street widths, frontage widths, and built form.

Challenges

- Suburban areas have literally been designed and built around the use of the private car. Creating a shift to active modes requires a complete rethink of the status quo.



5.7 Building an identity with placemaking and the public realm

The objective for Markham Centre remains the same today as when the original vision for the area was developed: create a stimulating and interesting place where people want to be. Participants at consultations also indicated a desire that Markham Centre have a strong and distinct identity that reflects the Markham community. Although great strides have been made toward that goal, more can be done. Taking Markham Centre to the next level will require reconsidering standards and conventional approaches in pursuit of creating an iconic place with a strong identity all its own through:

Streets and Streetscapes – These need to be designed to be convenient, interesting, and comfortable for walking, cycling and, more generally, spending time. They are a critical component of the public realm and the key to creating a truly pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment. Enterprise Boulevard is a particularly high-profile street whose vision can be refreshed to realize its aspirations as a place-defining central urban boulevard.

Parks and Open Spaces – Developing parks for high-density urban areas is a different challenge than in greenfield suburban developments in terms of the kind and intensity of programming. The park and open space network needs to be considered as a whole, providing a variety of spaces and experiences. This is an opportunity to contribute to a community's identity through unique and creative features. Although the park system must meet the needs of local residents, the City can also consider the development of destination parks and plazas that draw the Markham community into the Downtown.

Art and Tactical Urbanism – Placemaking initiatives need not always be permanent and capital intensive. Temporary and arts-based initiatives (tactical urbanism) can contribute to the area's dynamism and send a message about the vision for Markham Centre in the long term. Arts and culture can be used to foster an urban-feeling environment and attract people to the community, especially youth.

Challenges

- Existing City standards and conventions can serve as barriers to tailored solutions and innovative design in Markham Centre. As an example, the City transportation

department can review standards for street types in Markham Centre to ensure they meet placemaking and complete street objectives.

- The City must not settle for generic rather than iconic design of buildings, streets, parks and public spaces.



STEAMSHIP LINES

6. VISION

6. Vision

Markham Centre is Markham's downtown.

The Vision and Guiding Principles provide the foundation for the development of the Markham Centre Secondary Plan.

They are a clear statement of Markham's ambitions for its centre and will serve as a reference point for evaluating different options as the Secondary Plan process evolves. The Vision and Guiding Principles are based on an analysis of existing conditions, the identification of major opportunities and challenges and many discussions with the public, stakeholders, and staff.

It is the heart of the city and a vibrant, intensive, mixed use urban core.

As the centre of civic life and a hub of activity, it draws people from across Markham and the region to live, work, learn, play, and participate in the Markham community. Major public spaces, institutions and facilities solidify its role as a meeting place. Building on its success as a high-tech hub and locus of innovation, a range of businesses serve as an engine of economic prosperity and establish Markham Centre as an area of significant employment. Retail and entertainment uses further establish the downtown as a place to be. Together, this dynamic mix and range of uses create many reasons to come to Markham Centre, and many reasons to stay.

As well as a destination, Markham Centre is a home. A variety of housing provides options for people of all ages, household sizes and incomes to create a diverse and inclusive community. Markham Centre is composed of smaller neighbourhoods, each of which serve as a complete community for their residents, allowing them to meet their daily needs locally and within convenient walking distances.

Although they have their own character, Markham

Centre's neighbourhoods form a well connected and cohesive whole. The transportation system establishes a fine-grained pattern of linkages and makes walking, cycling and transit attractive and viable alternatives to getting around by car. Excellent higher order transit links Markham Centre to the surrounding region. The transit routes and their interchange at the future Mobility Hub at the Unionville GO station serve as focal points for development intensity.

The Rouge River Valley and a network of parks and greenspaces also link Markham Centre's neighbourhoods. This network is foundational to the area's ecological integrity and the quality of life of people who experience it. Careful treatment of the area's natural heritage is part of a broader approach to sustainability which establishes Markham Centre as a model of environmental performance.

When taken as a whole, Markham Centre's parts – private spaces and public spaces, streets and buildings, green spaces and hardscapes – come together to create an attractive and vital place. These parts are diverse, ranging from quiet intimate corners to places of great energy and excitement. They contribute to a distinct sense of identity that celebrates the variety of the Markham experience, reflecting on its past and encapsulating the multi-culturalism which is central to its dynamism.





7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 7.1 Create a place that is the heart of Markham
- 7.2 Support a diverse and prosperous economy
- 7.3 Support arts, culture, and recreation
- 7.4 Create an efficient and safe transportation system
- 7.5 Create a great public realm
- 7.6 Foster diverse built form
- 7.7 Build neighbourhoods with access to all the things needed for daily life
- 7.8 Realize the full potential of the Rouge River Valley as an environmental and placemaking feature
- 7.9 Champion sustainability and environmental performance
- 7.10 Plan for inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods
- 7.11 Transition from suburban to urban

7. Guiding Principles

7.1 Create a place that is the heart of Markham

Markham Centre will not be just another neighbourhood. It will be a Regional Centre and the city's downtown. It will be the place where all residents can proudly congregate, celebrate, and connect. It will attract people from across the city and region with its private and public uses and amenities.

Objectives

7.1.1 Establish major city-serving public spaces and civic facilities, including a major civic square, as activity anchors drawing people to Markham Centre.

7.1.2 Foster a diverse range of activities that make Markham Centre a destination for many different reasons and a lively place at different times of the day and week.

7.1.3 Concentrate the most dynamic uses in a downtown precinct, near the future Mobility Hub at Unionville GO Station.

7.1.4 Build a strong identity for Markham Centre through placemaking features, including interesting architecture, public art, greenery, and heritage representation that tells of Markham story and creates a sense of belonging.



Source: City of Mississauga



Source: City of Mississauga

Image 7.1, 7.2 Celebration Square, co-located with the Mississauga Civic Centre and Central Library, is the natural meeting place for the Mississauga community.



Source: Colliers Canada



Source: Neil Zeller

Image 7.3, 7.4 The Calgary Central Library is an example of a public facility with a city-wide draw, reinforcing the downtown as a focal point for the entire Calgary community and supporting the revitalization of the East Village neighbourhood. It is well-served by an integrated rapid transit station.

7.2 Support a diverse and prosperous economy

Markham Centre is already a successful and diversified economic hub that generates significant employment, particularly within the technology and service sectors. Employment uses will continue to be promoted in Markham Centre to further strengthen its regional economic status and achieve a healthy and prosperous balance between jobs and residents.

Objectives

7.2.1 Promote a robust and diversified mix of uses that establishes Markham Centre as an area of significant employment.

7.2.2 Foster a dynamic and attractive downtown urban area with great amenities to attract talent and employers.

7.2.3 Support a healthy balance between population to jobs.

7.2.4 Include a range of unit types and a mix of amenities that support an excellent home-based work environment.

7.2.5 Promote the entertainment and tourism sectors to add to the attractions bringing people into Markham Centre.

7.2.6 Build on the success of existing sectors to create ecosystems of complementary businesses.

7.2.7 Provide a range of retail and service experiences that serve local needs and draw customers from wider catchment, with particular focus on creating spaces for independent small businesses.

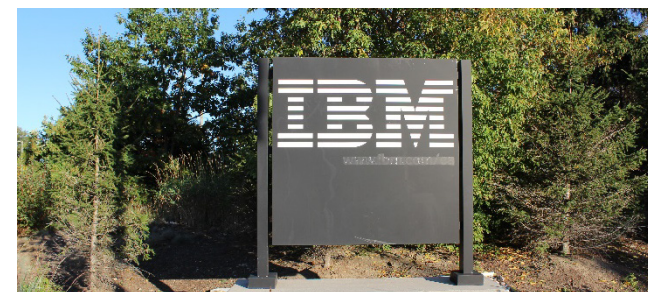


Image 7.5-7.7 Markham Centre has established a variety of office, retail, and service uses.

7.3 Support arts, culture, and recreation

Markham Centre consists of existing key cultural and community facilities, and public art installations that have become catalysts of activity in the downtown. Building upon these strong foundations, Markham Centre will support and reinforce itself as the cultural and entertainment hub for the City of Markham.

Objectives

7.3.1 Locate major public cultural facilities in Markham Centre, near the future Mobility Hub at the Unionville GO Station, to serve as incubators of cultural content.

7.3.2 Use public art to create a distinct sense of place and celebrate the dynamism of the Markham community and its rich economic, entrepreneurial, innovative, and cultural history.

7.3.3 Locate recreational facilities in Markham Centre to meet the needs of the local population.



Image 7.8-7.11 Public art, cultural attractions, and recreational facilities contribute to Markham Centre's lively identity.

7.4 Create an efficient and safe transportation system

Markham Centre will offer a robust transportation network that provides efficient, convenient and safe mobility options for people and goods, intermodal connections, and access to the regional transit system. Markham Centre will be an urban place that prioritizes and attracts active modes of transportation and transit to efficiently, conveniently, and safely move people and goods in a sustainable and healthy way as an alternative to driving.

Objectives

7.4.1 Establish Markham Centre as a nexus for higher order transit, where 15-minute all-day GO rail service, Viva Bus Rapid Transit, local bus service, and the 407 transitway meet to create excellent local and regional connectivity.

7.4.2 Create a comprehensive, separate, attractive and well-designed network for walking and cycling that allows people to easily get around within Markham Centre, including to the Unionville GO Station.

7.4.3 Prioritize movement by walking, cycling, and transit over that of cars.



Image 7.12-7.16 Markham Centre's existing transportation system includes movement by car, train, bus, bike, and foot.

7.5 Create a great public realm

Markham Centre will be a place people want to be. Critical in realizing this ambition is the creation of an exceptional public realm: animated, stimulating, attractive and safe. Streets, parks, privately owned publicly accessible spaces and all the other “in-between” spaces, as well as the buildings that frame and animate them, will be designed to achieve this goal. Together, these elements of the public realm will form the connective tissue that integrates the area into a cohesive and connected whole.

Objectives

7.5.1 Establish a fine-grained street and block pattern to create character, intimacy, and permeability.

7.5.2 Build streets as public places designed for vibrancy and safety to encourage walking, cycling, relaxing, and socializing.

7.5.3 Ensure buildings create a positive relationship to their surroundings with particular focus on the pedestrian experience.

7.5.4 Establish a hierarchy of parks and open spaces that contribute to a unique Markham Centre identity by integrating the natural environment, built form, and recreational and creative features.



Source: Nicola Betts



Image 7.17-7.19 Toronto's West Don Lands neighbourhood includes pedestrian-oriented roads (woonerfs), a network of open spaces, and Canada's first community-scale comprehensive master art plan.

7.6 Foster diverse built form

Markham Centre will be an intense urban environment, but not an undifferentiated mass of tall buildings. Markham Centre will include variety of built form in order to create visual interest, establish a human scale, relate well to surrounding streets and open spaces, and generate a true mix of housing types.

Objectives

7.6.1 Achieve targeted densities through a mix of built form within development blocks and areas, which represent a range and hierarchy of height and density.

7.6.2 Locate densities and uses in a manner that maximizes opportunities for walking, cycling, and transit ridership, while reducing dependency on the car.

7.6.3 Strive for architectural excellence and variety.

7.6.4 Provide a range of unit sizes and types within residential buildings.

7.6.5 Create buildings with a positive animating relationship to surrounding streets and other elements of the public realm.

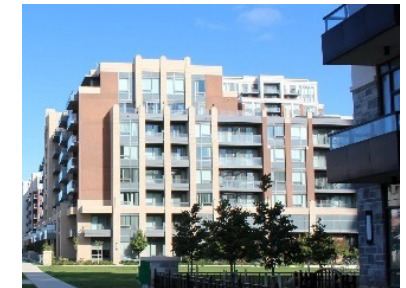


Image 7.20-7.28 Examples of Markham Centre's existing built form.

7.7 Build neighbourhoods with access to all the things needed for daily life

“15-Minute” neighbourhoods are complete communities where people have easy and convenient access to many of the places and services they use on a daily basis, including retail, restaurants, schools, and parks, without relying heavily on cars. Markham Centre covers a large area, but a number of features divide it into sub-areas. These sub-areas will evolve into well-defined “15-Minute” neighbourhoods that will be self-sustaining at a walkable scale with connections to other neighbourhoods.

Objectives

7.7.1 Promote a mix of uses that ensures that an appropriate range of amenities – potentially including retail, services, schools, parks, and community facilities – are within a 15-minute walk of areas with residential and employment uses.

7.7.2 Create a network for walking and cycling that increases the accessibility of destinations and has features that make these ways of moving around the community safe, viable, and attractive.

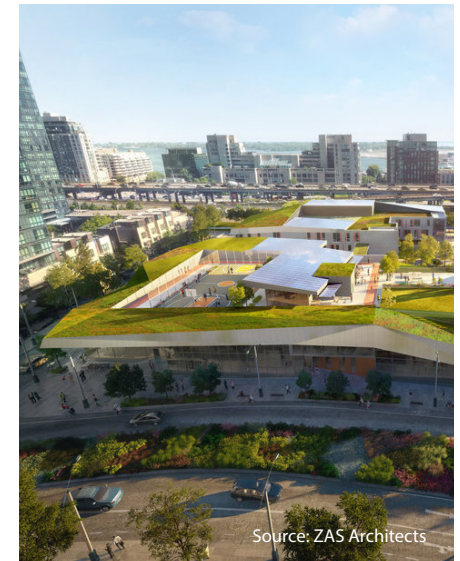


Image 7.29-7.32 Toronto’s Canoe Landing Centre is a multi-use community hub serving a high-density urban neighbourhood incorporating schools and a child care centre with parkland, athletic facilities, a public plaza, community kitchen, meeting rooms, and other amenities.

7.8 Realize the full potential of the Rouge River Valley as an environmental and placemaking feature

The Rouge River is an incredible natural amenity in Markham Centre, creating a distinct identity that features the river as the “lungs” of the downtown. Markham Centre’s built environment will connect to and complement the Rouge River Valley to celebrate this natural feature. The treatment of the Rouge River will balance the benefits of access, education, and public amenity with the need to preserve and enhance its ecological integrity and natural heritage.

Objectives

7.8.1 Preserve and enhance the ecological function of the natural heritage features that are present in Markham Centre, including those related to the Rouge River.

7.8.2 Incorporate the Rouge River Valley into a parks and open space network, providing appropriate access for passive recreational and educational purposes.

7.8.3 Create a trail system alongside and across the Rouge River Valley that forms the spine of an active transportation network that connects Markham Centre internally and establishes strong linkages to the rest of the city.



Image 7.33, 7.34 The Humber River Valley in western Toronto contains trails of varying intensity, connecting neighbourhoods and linking together parks along an open space system.

7.9 Champion sustainability and environmental performance

Markham Centre has realized significant sustainability achievements through district energy, green building standards and implementing innovative stormwater management solutions. Markham Centre will continue to serve as a model for sustainability and environmental performance.

Objectives

7.9.1 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through building efficiency and a transition to sustainable modes of transportation.

7.9.2 Support the expansion of the district energy system and the transition to less carbon-intensive sources of fuel.

7.9.3 Increase green building requirements, with the ultimate objective of net-zero buildings.

7.9.4 Employ innovative approaches to address the environmental performance of the urban environment, including managing waste and stormwater.

7.9.5 Promote vegetative cover and an expansion of the tree canopy throughout Markham Centre.



Image 7.35-7.37 Low-Impact Development practices at Markham's Bill Crothers Secondary School include bioretention areas, vegetated swales, constructed wetland type stormwater management facilities, and a rainwater harvesting system. Many streets within Markham Centre have good tree canopies.

7.10 Plan for inclusive neighbourhoods

Everyone will be able to find a home in Markham Centre, regardless of age, household size, and income. A variety of housing options will promote Markham Centre as an inclusive complete community to ensure it will be home to a diversity of households, with particular focus on purpose-built rental, varying unit sizes, and affordable options, all supported by a robust mix of uses, mobility options and amenities.

Objectives

7.10.1 Provide a mix of housing options that includes variety in terms of housing type, unit size, and tenure.

7.10.2 Consider incentives to provide purpose-built rental and affordable housing.



Image 7.38-7.41 Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood is a mixed-use, mixed-income community with a blend of market and rent-geared-to-income housing units along with commercial and employment uses and community amenities including parkland, athletic facilities, and a multi-use arts and culture centre.

7.11 Transition from suburban to urban

The vision for Markham Centre is for an intensely urban place. It will feature denser built form and a greater mixing of uses than is the norm in most other parts of Markham. People will drive less and walk, cycle and take transit more. These changes will not come over night. Certain aspects of this transition, particularly regarding transportation, will require care to ensure current approaches remain viable in the short and medium term, while long term goals are pursued. Another aspect of this transition is the use of technology to change how urban areas operate.

Objectives

7.11.1 Phase out surface parking within Markham Centre over time.

7.11.2 Consider interim uses, such as structured parking, which can meet present demands while offering opportunities for retrofit to other uses when demand changes.

7.11.3 Use digital technologies to enhance quality of life and improve the efficiency and resiliency of Markham Centre.



Image 7.42-7.44 Marine Gateway is Vancouver's first transit-oriented, mixed-use community, featuring residential, retail, entertainment, and office uses and providing an intermodal transfer between the Canada Line Skytrain and public buses.



PRIVATE PROPERTY
NO PARKING
LOADING
ZONE ONLY
15 MIN. LIMIT
UNAUTHORIZED
VEHICLES WILL
BE TACED AND
OR TOWED AWAY
AT OWNER'S
EXPENSE

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Exploring Ideas Through Development Options
- 8.2 Elaborating a Preferred Concept
- 8.3 Creating a Secondary Plan

8. Next Steps

Public and stakeholder consultation is an integral part of each step in our process. We hope to capture the imagination of a community for its downtown, generate and test ideas, and develop a framework to achieve an exciting future for Markham Centre.

8.1 Exploring Ideas through Development Options

Now that we have confirmed our Vision and Guiding Principles, we need to determine what they will look like in practice. Our team will generate a number of development options that explore different mixes and locations of uses, densities, heights, road layouts, approaches to pedestrian and cycling mobility, and parks and open space networks. We'll need your feedback on these development options! Stay tuned to Your Voice Markham for ways you can participate.

8.2 Elaborating a Preferred Concept

Based on consultation with the public and stakeholders, we'll create and refine a preferred concept, drawing on the best parts of the development options.

8.3 Creating the Secondary Plan

The preferred concept will be presented as a recommendation, serving as the basis for a Secondary Plan to be adopted into the Markham Official Plan to guide future development.





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