

December 7, 2020

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Ms. Kimberley Kitteringham,  
City Clerk,  
City of Markham,  
101 Town Centre Boulevard  
Markham ON  
L3R 9W3

**Re: Development Services Committee Meeting  
December 8, 2020  
Item 9.1; RECOMMENDATION REPORT, Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Community**

Dear Ms. Kitteringham:

The Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham, consisting of Regional Councillor Heath, Diane Gabay, Andy Langer, Gail Leet and Christl Reeh has reviewed the Recommendation Report prepared by City staff, and are underwhelmed by this work. We have summarized the recommendations (see attached) and have specific observations and recommendations for the points raised in the report. Finally, we have proposed a resolution for adoption by Development Services Committee:

1. The initial recommendations (19 in total) were made by our Committee on March 18, 2019. Development Services Committee requested this report be ready for November, 2019. This work has taken an additional 13 months, which is an unacceptably long delay. Any excuse started with, or including the word COVID, seems to us to be misdirected. We find the 13 month delay in an initial request for a response in 8 months incredibly irresponsible.
2. The Report addressed 12 of the initial 19 recommendations made by our Committee. After careful review of the responses contained in the report, we believe they can be summarized as follows:
  - a. Due to a lack of legislative requirements, all we can do is try to persuade developers to incorporate desirable features during the subdivision or site plan review process
  - b. We should commence a new study at some future date (e.g. the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines, to commence in Q3 2021, with an indefinite end date, or a report back in 2021 regarding Inclusionary Zoning as part of the updated Housing Strategy)
  - c. We would need to work with other levels of government to establish funding frameworks (for instance, on the matter of a pilot program for retrofitting existing homes with elevators or chair lifts)

Our Committee is disappointed in the lack of any sense of urgency, a need to redo work rather than use existing work (e.g. Age-Friendly Design Guidelines, which are widely available to anyone with Internet search capabilities), and a lack of initiative to undertake work which might

cross jurisdictional lines. Our Committee presented these recommendations to the City of Markham, our municipal level of government, as a suggestion that this level of government take the initiative for **bold action**.

3. Our Committee commends the work that has been done over the last 18 months with respect to Affordable Housing under Mayor Scarpitti's leadership, which we were pleased to be included in. We see an intersection of the recommendations contained in our report with that work, since seniors also need affordable housing! One of the key barriers to affordability, raised by all participants in these complex discussions, is the **availability of affordable land**. In our recommendations, we addressed this issue in Recommendations #5 and #6 ("The Supply of Land" and "Preferable Locations"). We understand this is a complex issue that can also cross into regional and other jurisdictions. We implore the City to take the lead on this matter, to quickly develop an approach, either as facilitator or active participant by making land currently owned by the City available for appropriate uses (e.g. affordable housing, affordable seniors housing, hospice, housing for persons with disabilities, etc.). Other municipalities in Canada and public agencies (including Metrolinx) have made strides in this area by offering parking lot space to developers in exchange for offsetting parking availability. We strongly recommend that Council become actively engaged to provide direction to staff, to advance on this matter. Perhaps a pilot program, located immediately adjacent to City Hall and utilizing the current parking lot, would be a showcase location for a hospice and a home for vulnerable seniors and persons with disabilities.
4. Recommendation #9 (Seniors Snow Clearing) was recommended to be deferred until after the survey, planned to be conducted at the end of the 20/21 winter, is completed with a report. There was also an indication of budgetary concerns. Likely, we anticipate these two reasons (deferral awaiting a further report, and then deferral because of budgetary reasons) will cause this can to be kicked down the road for at least two years if not longer. This continued deferral of action is extremely galling, and we suggest that DSC request more immediate action.
5. Similarly, Recommendation #10 (Sidewalk Completion) has been exhaustively studied and prioritized. We have all come to recognize, especially as we face a full winter under COVID-related restrictions, the importance of being able to perform some level of outdoor activity including walking in our City. Promising that sidewalks will be completed by 2027, or perhaps a year earlier, does little for people TODAY. We need priorities to be reassessed in light of changing conditions (e.g. COVID), and request that funding be redirected to support this initiative, which is directly linked to creating opportunities for adopting a healthier lifestyle.
6. Our Committee is encouraged by the suggestion of a Council workshop to engage with these diverse areas of discussion. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by COVID on the ability to conduct an in-person workshop, we have recently experienced how effective such a workshop could be if conducted by Zoom (for instance, the Mayor's recent Markham Housing Summit was well orchestrated and generated positive ideas).
7. The original list of 19 recommendations formulated and presented by our Committee was intended as a comprehensive and exhaustive set of recommendations for moving forward. We suggest that DSC reconsider those recommendations excluded from this report, which were presented to the City for specific action, as follows:

- a. Residential Hospice: Regional Councillor Heath did host the workshop with interested participants in June 2019. However, momentum has diffused since that time (in part due to the distraction of COVID for all participants in the health care sector). Markham, shamefully, is the only city in the Top 20 cities in Ontario by population that does not have residential hospice facilities. The City is encouraged to continue to play a leadership role to bring the right parties together to provide this critical service to the residents of Markham. In addition, (see Recommendation #5 and #6 in this letter), the City could spur the development of this capability through a donation of land, which is one of the major cost elements holding back this important initiative.
- b. Nursing and Personal Support Workers: our Committee understands this is not under the direct jurisdiction of the City. We have all experienced the stress on this group through the current pandemic. Our Committee continues to believe the City can exert influence with all levels of government to recommend that York Region and the Province dramatically ramp-up at-home care for both nursing and personal support services including corporate and individual registration and qualifications, training, financial assistance, etc., in order to encourage seniors needing lower levels of such care to remain in their homes longer before being required to transfer to a facility with higher levels of care.
- c. Markham Parking Authority: as the City proceeds with the development and implementation of Recommendation #5 (The Supply of Land), we believe developing a well-structured off hours parking program will be an important associated program, to ensure that adequate parking is available.
- d. Surplus school property: our Committee continues to believe the City could be effective in proposing a policy change to the Provincial government, to improve the cost-effective availability of land deemed surplus by school boards.
- e. Secondary Suites: While we understand that Council has debated this issue. We encourage a review of the current approach as a part of the Mayor's affordable housing strategy.
- f. Coach Houses: similarly, our Committee believes that Coach Houses and Tiny Homes could also prove to be another effective component of the affordable housing strategy for Markham. As cities continue to develop different approaches for infill housing and to increase urban density cost-effectively, we recommend that Markham continue to evolve thinking on the attractiveness of such small house approaches to meeting citizens' needs.

In order to move to action rapidly on these critical matters, we propose the following motion for adoption by Development Services Committee:

**We recommend the adoption of the following motion by Development Services Committee, for presentation to General Council:**

- 1. That the staff report entitled "RECOMMENDATION REPORT, Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Community", dated December 8,2020, be received; and**

2. That the letter prepared by the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham dated December 7, 2020 be received; and
3. That the work of the Mayor's Affordable Housing initiative be conjoined with the recommendations prepared by the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham; and
4. That a Sub-Committee of Development Services Committee including interested Councillors and two to three community members be formed to:
  - a. Design and conduct a workshop before the end of March, 2021, as part of the Urban Design Study process to develop Age Friendly Design Guidelines and further explore solutions to provide for an age-friendly Markham; and
  - b. Develop the guidelines and process to identify and make available publicly-owned land in the City of Markham for affordable housing and not-for-profit purposes in a transparent and fair manner; and
  - c. Actively advocate for the introduction of residential hospice facilities in the City of Markham; and
  - d. Recommend specific actions on all of the other matters raised in the reports identified above.

We continue to be hopeful that the City can be spurred to action on these important matters, and look forward to implementation of such forward-looking initiatives in our great City!

Respectfully submitted,

*The Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham*

Highlights of the report by staff:

Recommendation	Staff Report Response
<p>1. <b>Always Homes:</b> That all future single, semi and townhome developments approved in Markham contain a minimum number of Always Homes, those which allow owners the option of aging longer in their home, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♣ 10% of new home developments be Always Homes and built on grade with no basement thus ensuring greater affordability and accessibility; and,</li> <li>♣ 10% of new home developments be Always Homes and built on grade with a full basement; and,</li> <li>♣ 10% of new condo units being developed meet the Always guidelines as well;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need basements, so not in agreement with that recommendation (required for secondary suites?)</li> <li>• Done now at subdivision or site plan review, through gentle encouragement of developers for single family dwellings</li> <li>• Currently encouraging second suites into low rise developments</li> <li>• More feasible in multi-storey apartment units</li> </ul>
<p>2. <b>Always Home Guidelines:</b> That the City develop standards for Always Homes and units for implementation as soon as possible in all new developments, having consideration for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♣ wheelchair accessibility including hallway widths</li> <li>♣ better kitchen and bathroom design</li> <li>♣ a shower on the main floor</li> <li>♣ proper door handles</li> <li>♣ a location for short-term sleeping quarters on the main floor</li> <li>♣ no steps from grade to the front door, and to the main floor inside</li> <li>♣ railing and ramp locations for future installation if required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No legislative framework</li> <li>• Planning and Urban Design staff will develop “Age Friendly Design Guidelines”. Study to <b>commence</b> Q3, 2021</li> </ul>
<p>3. <b>Home elevators &amp; Chair lifts – New Homes:</b> That, to improve mobility for seniors and others within their own homes thus allowing them to remain in them longer, the City require that all new singles, semis and townhouses being built in Markham include space and structural supports for future installation of home elevators and chair lifts if needed;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Done by encouragement today</li> <li>• Offered by some developers at the sales level (i.e. buyer’s choice)</li> </ul>
<p>4. <b>Home elevators &amp; Chair lifts – Existing Homes:</b> That, to improve mobility for seniors and others within their own homes for those living in the City's existing homes, Markham and York Region conduct a pilot retrofit home elevator and chair lift program for different types of existing homes to determine the best ways to retrofit them;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would need a partnership with other levels of government to establish funding framework. <b>No action.</b></li> </ul>
<p>5. <b>The Supply of Land:</b> That, since the cost and availability of land are the largest impediments to significantly increasing the supply of affordable housing for seniors and others, land presently being used for surface parking be obtained at no cost in exchange for underground parking and/or structured spaces within new developments for the purpose of building affordable townhouses, condo apartments and purpose built rentals, with particular consideration to parking lots found at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♣ public utility companies;</li> <li>♣ school boards;</li> <li>♣ hospitals;</li> <li>♣ public transportation agencies;</li> <li>♣ governments at all levels; and,</li> <li>♣ places of worship;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex and requires further consideration and direction from DSC</li> <li>• Consider Draft Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy</li> <li>• Need clarity of role for City</li> <li>• Need consultation with Region re: affordable housing for seniors, hospice care and social services</li> <li>• <b>WHAT IS THE DIRECTION FROM DSC???</b></li> </ul>

<p><b>6. Preferable Locations:</b> That the City, in order to reduce the requirement for automobiles, concentrate on finding location opportunities for Recommendation (e) above near:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♣ good transit;</li> <li>♣ important services such as medical and dental; and,</li> <li>♣ amenities such as grocery stores, pharmacies and other retail shops;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the City is to be an active participant in the acquisition of land for the development of affordable housing, or the facilitation of such development, then guidelines would need to be established by Council to guide the City's participation in this process. Further consideration would also be required if the City takes on the potentially conflicting roles of land developer and approval authority.</li> <li>• <b>WHAT IS THE DIRECTION FROM DSC???</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Inclusionary Zoning:</b> That the City implement an inclusionary zoning policy for Markham so that all future apartment developments, and other types of housing if possible, contain a reasonable percentage of affordable housing developments, as determined by Council through input by the public and stakeholders;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusionary zoning is being considered as part of the City's ongoing work to develop an updated Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy.</li> <li>• Staff will report back in 2021 as part of the updated Housing Strategy</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Live Work Opportunities:</b> That future developments in the City include increased allotments for live/work opportunities for neighbourhood services and residential areas in order that nearby residents, especially seniors, can walk to local services, and that the City look for opportunities to increase live/work opportunities within its existing urban boundary;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Done through gentle persuasion of the development industry</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Seniors Snow Clearing:</b> That, if the City does not provide a city-wide windrow clearing service in the near future, Markham improve the current service for seniors by making it quicker;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current practices to be surveyed following 20/21 winter. Note budget implications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Sidewalk Completion:</b> That, in order to provide a safe environment for seniors and others wishing to walk for exercise and/or walk to services, the City target the "Finish-Date" of its Sidewalk Completion Program for Arterial and Collector Roads by 2026 or earlier;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has been the topic of a number of reports</li> <li>• Target (to be confirmed in 2022) for completion in 2027 or earlier</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. Implementation:</b> That City staff suggest an appropriate organization or organizations to oversee some of the projects envisioned above, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♣ an independent non-profit agency;</li> <li>♣ a current or new City/Regional agency; or,</li> <li>♣ a special section within the Development Services Commission;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep within DSC. "The Commissioner of Development Services will consider the implications of the age friendly planning recommendations on the resources and structure of the Commission and move forward to implement the recommendations."</li> </ul>
<p><b>12. Future Urban Area:</b> That Markham's Future Urban Area being developed in the Woodbine, Warden, and Kennedy areas north of Major Mackenzie, be designed with the above recommendations in mind.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Done through gentle persuasion of the development industry</li> </ul>
<p><b>CONCLUSION</b> Staff closely examined and assessed each recommendations of the Committee for an Age Friendly Markham for implementation. In some areas, implementation is possible but in other areas further discussion and direction is required. Staff are recommending a Council workshop be held as part of the Urban Design Study process to develop Age Friendly Design Guidelines to further explore solutions to provide for an age-friendly Markham. Development Services staff have had some success working with developers to include accessible design considerations in new housing on a voluntary basis to encourage aging in place. Staff will continue this positive dialogue with the industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a scheduled time for the Council Workshop?</li> </ul>