

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION REPORT
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Community

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RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report titled “RECOMMENDATION REPORT, Update on Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Community”, dated December 8, 2020, be received;
- 2) That a Council workshop be held as part of the Urban Design Study process to develop Age Friendly Design Guidelines; and
- 3) That staff report back to Development Services Committee on Age Friendly Design Guidelines once the guidelines are completed.

BACKGROUND:

On March 18, 2019, Development Services Committee (DSC) received a presentation titled “Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Community by the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham”. The Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham comprises Regional Councillor Heath and four community members with a shared interest in senior housing issues. Their March 18, 2019 presentation made 18 recommendations to DSC on matters related to:

- The importance of incorporating age-friendly design and principles into planning, and developing age-friendly action plans;
- Municipal responsibilities and capabilities as opposed to those of other levels of government;
- The potential to integrate some of the proposed recommendations into key municipal plans such as official plans, urban design guidelines and street designs; and,
- Consultation with and involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders such as older residents, municipal staff, Council, developers and various service providers.

In accordance with the resolution (attached as Appendix ‘A’) adopted at the March 18, 2019 DSC Meeting, the recommendations were modified to direct staff to consider 12 recommendations deemed to be within the jurisdiction of the municipality. Accordingly, Committee consented to delete recommendations relating to Residential Hospices, Nursing and Personal Support Services, a Markham Parking Authority, Surplus School Property, Secondary Suites, and Coach Houses. The remaining 12 recommendations are discussed

in this report. Appendix B provides information on the modified recommendations to be considered by staff in this Information Report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Information Report is to provide staff input on the 12 recommendations made by the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham. It should be noted that the information provided in this report is to advise on matters within the City's jurisdiction. Some of the recommendations are outside of the City's jurisdiction or requires partnerships or input from various groups, such as the development industry, landowners, or regional and provincial authorities. Additionally, some of the recommendations will be further explored in ongoing studies by the Planning and Urban Design Department and other departments, as noted in this report.

DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS ON COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**Committee Recommendation - 'Always Homes':**

"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:

- 10% of new home developments be Always Homes and built on grade with no basement thus ensuring greater affordability and accessibility; and,
- 10% of new home developments be Always Homes and built on grade with a full basement; and,
- 10% of new condo units being developed meet the Always homes guidelines as well."

Comment:

This recommendation outlines specific targets to incorporate "always homes" into new developments approved in the City, to support the ability for home owners to 'age in place' if and when their mobility needs change over time. In other words, having the ability to remain in one's current home longer, even if their needs change. There are a number of benefits to 'aging in place', including:

- Maintaining independence;
- Familiarity of settings, friends, family and routines;
- Improved health and quality of life; and
- Cost savings from continuing to live at home.

Aging in place has become even more important due to the Covid 19 Pandemic and the anxiety Seniors undoubtedly have over the potential need to move into long term care facilities. Staff fully recognize and appreciate the importance of aging in place, however there is no regulatory framework in place to allow the City to regulate or implement the targets referenced in this recommendation. Establishing such targets will require further analysis to determine if they are attainable and implementable, and will require input from the development industry and other industry stakeholders. Additionally, staff are concerned that not having a basement, in order to allow for at-grade developments, may in fact take away a revenue stream from potential property owners who wish to have a legal secondary suite in the basement.

There are challenges to requiring ‘always homes’ within low rise housing forms (singles, semi-detached, townhouse, stacked townhouses and back to back townhouses). For instance, there are no legislated requirements for these dwellings to be built with at grade entries or if not built at grade, to provide barrier free access through the use of elevators, access ramps, etc.

Notwithstanding the lack of legislative requirements, Development Services staff have had success in encouraging developers at either the subdivision or site plan review stages to incorporate design features that promote improved accessibility in new low rise developments over and above the requirements of the Ontario Building Code. Successes have included units with a reduced number of risers (stairs) to enter the unit, external porches or internal stairways wide enough to provide future retrofits of chairlifts, rough-ins for future retrofits of elevators, dwellings that contain elevators, and master bedrooms situated on the main floor, access ramps etc. For low rise housing the Ontario Building Code requires new residential dwelling units to have one bathroom in each dwelling unit equipped with additional wall reinforcement to accommodate future grab bar installation.

Staff have also encouraged developers to incorporate purpose built second suites into new low rise developments, to assist with affordability in general (for both the renters and the landlords) as well as to offer seniors (or other family members) the opportunity to live in extended family situations while retaining some independence. Some developers have also agreed to offer optional floor plans in the sales office so that the ground floor can be offered as an independent dwelling unit.

The incorporation of ‘always homes’ may be more feasible within multi-storey apartment units, which as per the recommendation are required by the Ontario Building Code to have access ramps for ingress/egress to the building, elevators and hallways that can accommodate a certain width for path of travel for unencumbered access. Additionally, new apartment/condominium units are required to have the following:

- 15% of all residential suites are required to be provided with a barrier free path of travel
- Barrier free path of travel is required from the entrance door to at least one bedroom, bathroom, a kitchen and a living space
- bathrooms to be provided with wall reinforcement to accommodate grab bar installation
- bathrooms to be big enough to accommodate the turning radius of a wheelchair

Committee Recommendation - ‘Always Homes’ Guidelines:

“That the City develop standards for Always Homes and units for implementation as soon as possible in all new developments, having consideration for:

- wheelchair accessibility including hallway widths
- better kitchen and bathroom design
- a shower on the main floor
- proper door handles
- a location for short-term sleeping quarters on the main floor
- no steps from grade to the front door, and to the main floor inside
- railing and ramp locations for future installation if required.”

Comment:

There is no legislation that will allow the measures noted in this recommendation to be required through the development application approval process. However, Planning and Urban Design staff will develop 'Age Friendly Design Guidelines' for the use of City Planners and Development Industry stakeholders to assess the private and public realm components of a proposed development so that specific age-friendly design features are taken into consideration to enhance long-term accessibility and adaptability for all users. The Guidelines will help create homes and communities that are accessible, functional, safe and adaptable to all members of society, with varying abilities. This would include maintaining independent living for seniors in their own homes. The proposals made by the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham will be addressed through this study. This project is expected to commence in Q3 2021. Staff will report back to DSC upon completion of the study, with recommendations based on its findings.

Committee Recommendation - 'Home Elevators & Chair Lifts – New Homes':

"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."

Comment:

As noted above, City staff have had success in working with some developers through the subdivision and site plan review process to include structural supports for future retrofits that improve the accessibility of a dwelling. Examples have included design of external porches and internal stairs to accommodate installation of chair lifts or ramps. Others have included rough-ins for the future installation of an elevator from the basement level to the top floor level of townhomes, including arranging the floor boards to easily be removed for this renovation. In some circumstances developers have agreed to provide these features within a certain percentage of the development and also promote these features as an option in the sales office.

While these measures are not required, and may not always be fully realized with every application, they may be considered as part of the strategy to implement the Age Friendly Design Guideline study by the Urban Design section noted above.

Committee Recommendation - 'Home Elevators & Chair Lifts – Existing Homes':

"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."

Comment:

Successful implementation of this recommendation will require partnership between the City and Region, and/or higher level of government or non-profit agency(s) to establish a funding framework to provide the necessary financial assistance for the pilot projects.

Committee Recommendation - ‘The Supply of Land’ :

“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:

- public utility companies;
- school boards;
- hospitals;
- public transportation agencies;
- governments at all levels; and,
- places of worship.”

Comment:

This item is complex and requires further consideration and direction from DSC. Committee should consider what type of role is envisioned for the City respecting the acquisition and/or exchange of land.

On September 12, 2018, Council requested Staff to report back on an updated Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy for the City of Markham. A two phase study has been undertaken. The Phase 1 report provides a housing needs assessment of current and emerging housing gaps in Markham considered by DSC on April 29, 2019. Phase 2: Policy Framework and Recommendations considered by DSC on February 24, 2020 included a Draft Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy. The Draft Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy includes actions that consider the use of City-owned surplus or underutilized lands, incentives and partnering with stakeholders to support the development of new affordable housing.

It will have to be determined whether the City will facilitate the acquisition and/or exchange of land between the developer and the organizations/landowners indicated above, or whether the City will take on a more active/developer type of role and be an active participant in related transactions. The Region would also have to be consulted to determine what role it will have with respect to providing affordable housing for seniors, hospice care and social services.

Committee Recommendation – “Preferable Locations”:

“That the City, in order to reduce the requirement for automobiles, concentrate on finding location opportunities for the Recommendation above (Supply of Land) near:

- good transit;
- important services such as medical and dental; and,
- amenities such as grocery stores, pharmacies and other retail shops.”

Comment:

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.

Committee Recommendation - 'Inclusionary Zoning':

"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."

Comment:

Inclusionary zoning is being considered as part of the City's ongoing work to develop an updated Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy. On September 12, 2018, Council requested Staff to report back on an updated Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy for the City of Markham including options for inclusionary zoning. It should be noted that the Province only permits inclusionary zoning to be implemented within Protected Major Transit Station Areas or areas where the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has ordered adoption of a Community Planning Permit System (also known as a Development Permit System). Staff will report back in 2021 as part of the updated Housing Strategy.

Committee Recommendation - 'Live Work Opportunities':

"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."

Comment:

The City's new 2014 Official Plan (as partially approved on November 24th, 2017 and further updated on April 9th, 2018) establishes mixed use land use designations throughout the City to encourage a diverse range of uses including retail, personal service, professional office, community, institutional and recreational uses to be located close to residents and businesses to serve them. Most low density homes are allowed to have certain home occupations up to a maximum floor area, and appropriate ground floor non residential uses are permitted in medium and high density developments.

City staff are working with the development industry to implement the vision of the 2014 Official Plan with the goal of creating compact and vibrant mixed-use communities that offer a range of housing, services and commercial amenities within close proximity of each other. These communities are planned to be transit supportive and pedestrian-oriented to provide residents with greater access to surrounding amenities without the reliance of car ownership.

Committee Recommendation - 'Seniors Snow Clearing':

"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."

Comment:

The City has a Snow Windrow Removal Assistance Program, which is administered by the Roads, Survey and Utility Division of the Operations Department. This program is designed to help disabled and elderly residents maintain road access from their driveways during the winter season. Information on the City's website advises residents that:

"Crews will be dispatched to clear the centre portion of snow windrows (one car width only) on all roads following a 7.5 centimetres (3 inches) snow fall. Windrows will be cleared within 8 hours after crews plow the road. The City reserves the right to decide when snow windrow service will take place. Also note that the windrow left from the sidewalk plow is not included in this service."

Additionally, on November 18, 2019, General Committee received a Winter Maintenance Update presentation, which summarized a public opinion survey on improving winter maintenance service levels. This included consideration of increased taxes for city wide windrow clearance. According to the presentation, 44% of respondents were in support of paying an increase in tax, and 42% of respondents were opposed (13% were indifferent, and 1% were undecided). Operations staff also advise they will be conducting a post winter survey with the approximately 5,300+ residents currently approved for the Windrow Assistant Program to seek feedback before determining any improvement/enhancement areas. The findings of this survey will be presented to Council at a yet to be determined date. Note the survey was intended to be conducted following the 2019/2020 winter, but was held over due to the Covid19 Pandemic. Operations staff expect to conduct this study following the 2020/2021 winter. Budget implications will also have to be assessed by the Markham Budget Sub-Committee.

Committee Recommendation - 'Sidewalk Completion':

"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."

Comment:

The Transportation Planning section of the Engineering Department is overseeing the Sidewalk Completion Program to fill in gaps in the City's sidewalk network. As a summary:

On May 23, 2017, DSC received a staff report entitled "Infill Sidewalk Prioritization Process and Methodology". That report provided information on:

- Health and community benefits of a comprehensive sidewalk network;
- Sidewalk policy in new subdivisions;
- Sidewalk network inventory by ward; and
- Five-step sidewalk infill process and methodology.

The report recommended that sidewalk gaps on arterial and collector roads be prioritized as most community amenities and services (e.g. employment areas, schools, public transit, community institutions, etc.) tend to be located along these corridors. Council endorsed the report recommendations.

On November 13, 2017, DSC endorsed a further staff report entitled “City-wide Infill Sidewalk Five-Year Capital Plan”. The report summarized the process and methodology with respect to identifying and closing sidewalk gaps in the City’s sidewalk network along arterial and collector roads. A proposed 5-year capital plan was outlined, where higher priority locations would be completed over the period of 2019 to 2023.

On November 19, 2018, DSC endorsed a report entitled “Arterial and Collector Road Sidewalk Completion Program, All Wards”. The report summarized the program planning and resource implications to complete the program over the period of 2019 to 2028. In addition, an overview of a public communications plan to complement the program was summarized with a Council direction to staff to develop a detailed public communications plan for the sidewalk network completion program starting in 2019. The Council resolution includes the following:

- 1) That the report entitled “Arterial and Collector Road Sidewalk Completion Program, All Wards” be received; and,
- 2) That the annual sidewalk capital program to close network gaps over the period of 2019 to 2028 be prioritized based on the projects in Attachment ‘C’ until the project list is exhausted or projects are eliminated; and,
- 3) That staff be directed to develop a public communications plan for the sidewalk network completion program starting in 2019; and,
- 4) That staff report annually on the proposed list of sidewalks to be completed within the year and that report be considered at the Budget Subcommittee; and further,
- 5) That staff report back on the sidewalk program by 2022 to complete the program earlier by 1 or 2 years, and to update the projects in Tables A.3 and Table A.4 where appropriate; and further,
- 6) That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Based on the above, staff will be reporting back to DSC prior to 2022 to update on the Sidewalk Completion Program, and advise on whether the program can be completed 1 to 2 years earlier, which would target completion by 2027 or earlier.

Committee Recommendation - ‘Implementation’:

“That City staff suggest an appropriate organization or organizations to oversee some of the projects envisioned above, such as:

- an independent non-profit agency;
- a current or new City/Regional agency; or,
- a special section within the Development Services Commission”.

Comment:

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.

Committee Recommendation - 'The Future Urban Area':

That Markham's Future Urban Area being developed in the Woodbine, Warden, and Kennedy Road areas north of Major Mackenzie, be designed with the above recommendations in mind.

Comment:

As noted earlier, staff have been in discussions with various developers, including those in the new urban area (FUA) and those proposing development in our intensification and infill residential areas. The initiatives noted in this report, such as working with developers to encourage the provision of purpose built secondary suites, structural elements/rough-ins to accommodate future installation of chair lifts or elevators, access ramps, master bedrooms on the main floors, will promote many of the recommendations proposed by the Committee for Age-Friendly Community.

As noted earlier, legislative authority to mandate these elements in residential developments is limited and many developers only agree to provide these elements on a voluntary basis and as options to the homebuyers. Staff will continue to work with developers to determine the success of options offered in the sales centers. Staff will provide this information at a future Council workshop.

CONCLUSION

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.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Certain recommendations by the Committee for Age-Friendly Community such as retrofitting existing homes and seniors snow clearing will have financial implications.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The proposed applications have been reviewed in the context of the City's Strategic Priorities of Growth Management, Transportation and Municipal Services.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

The Engineering, Legal Services and Operations departments were consulted in the preparation of this report.

Biju Karumanchery, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Director of Planning and
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Commissioner of Development
Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix 'A' – March 18, 2019 Development Services Committee Resolutions

Appendix 'B' – Modified 'Age-Friendly' Recommendations to be considered by Staff in
this Information Report

Appendix 'A' March 18, 2010 Development Services Committee Resolutions

Moved by Councillor Reid McAlpine

Seconded by Regional Councillor Jack Heath

1. That the presentation provided by the Members of the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham (Regional Councillor Jack Heath, Andy Langer, Gail Leet, Christl Reeh and Diane Gabay) entitled "Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Community", be received; and,
2. That the deputations by Elisabeth Tan, Anthony Ko, and Lucy Giammarco regarding the Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Community be received; and,
3. That staff be directed to report back to Development Services Committee on the following recommendations for an Age-Friendly Markham by November 2019:
 - a. 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:
 - 10% of new home developments be Always Homes and built on grade with no basement thus ensuring greater affordability and accessibility; and,
 - 10% of new home developments be Always Homes and built on grade with a full basement; and,
 - 10% of new condo units being developed meet the Always guidelines as well; and,
 - b. That the City develop standards for Always Homes and units for implementation as soon as possible in all new developments, having consideration for:
 - wheelchair accessibility including hallway widths
 - better kitchen and bathroom design
 - a shower on the main floor
 - proper door handles
 - a location for short-term sleeping quarters on the main floor
 - no steps from grade to the front door, and to the main floor inside
 - railing and ramp locations for future installation if required; and,
 - c. 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; and,
 - d. 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; and,
 - e. 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:
 - public utility companies;
 - school boards;

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- hospitals;
 - public transportation agencies;
 - governments at all levels; and,
 - places of worship; and,
- f. That the City, in order to reduce the requirement for automobiles, concentrate on finding location opportunities for Recommendation (e) above near:
- good transit;
 - important services such as medical and dental; and,
 - amenities such as grocery stores, pharmacies and other retail shops; and,
- g. 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; and,
- h. 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; and,
- i. 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; and,
- j. 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; and,
- k. That City staff suggest an appropriate organization or organizations to oversee some of the projects envisioned above, such as:
- an independent non-profit agency;
 - a current or new City/Regional agency; or,
 - a special section within the Development Services Commission; and further,
- l. 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.

Carried

Appendix 'B' Modified' Age Friendly Recommendations to be Considered by Staff in this Information Report

The Committee consented to modifying the recommendations to direct staff to consider only those recommendations that are deemed to be within the jurisdiction of the municipality.

The Committee suggested that the following proposed recommendations be referred to staff:

- "Always" Homes
- "Always" Guidelines
- Home Elevators & Chair Lifts for New Homes
- Home Elevators & Chair Lifts for Existing Homes
- The Supply of Land
- Preferable Locations
- Inclusionary Zoning
- Live/Work Opportunities
- Seniors' Snow Clearing Service
- Sidewalk Completion
- Implementation
- The Future Urban Area

The Committee consented that the following proposed recommendations be deleted:

- Residential Hospices
- Nursing and Personal Support Services
- Markham Parking Authority
- Surplus School Property
- Secondary Suites
- Coach Houses