MARKHAM

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Development Services Committee

From: Arvin Prasad, MCIP, RPP
               Commissioner of Development Services

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Date: March 30, 2021

Re: **Development Application Public Notice Improvements - Update**

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the memorandum dated March 30, 2021, titled "Development Application Public Notice Improvements – Update" be received;

2. That the new development application public notices, attached as Appendix B and Appendix C, be endorsed; and

3. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

At Development Services Committee (DSC) on November 9, 2020, Staff presented proposed changes to posted and mailed development application public notices (see Appendix A). Members of DSC provided their comments, and directed Staff to host a Focus Group. The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the comments shared by members of DSC and members of the public, and detail how these comments are addressed in the revised notices.

DISCUSSION:

As directed by DSC, Staff held a Community Focus Group on January 14, 2021. Seven community members representing five Residents Associations attended. Staff presented the new posted notice signs and sought feedback on the design of the signs, the language used, the use of

icons and the placement of the signs on the street. There was consensus among participants that the new signs are an improvement over the existing signs. Participants noted that the existing signs can be intimidating and difficult to read whereas the new signs present the information more clearly. Participants appreciated the inclusion of an image, as well as the use of icons, to describe the proposal with less text. Participants also liked that the signs encourage community input by saying "Learn more and tell us what you think".

The table below summarizes the comments and questions received by members of DSC and participants of the Community Focus Group, and outlines how each comment and question was addressed in the revised signs (See Appendix B and Appendix C).

Table 1. Comments and Responses

Source of Comment/ Question	Comment or Question	Response and Action
DSC	Should the signs be perpendicular or parallel to the street?	Staff asked this question at the Community Focus Group. There was no consensus; however, several individuals noted that the placement depends on the property. For example, a parallel placement makes more sense on a property facing a street with heavy pedestrian traffic; whereas, a perpendicular placement is more suitable for a property facing a street with heavy vehicular traffic. Staff recommend that one placement be selected to ensure consistency. Staff recommend keeping the current parallel placement.
DSC	Enlarge "Development Notice" heading and relocate City of Markham logo	Staff asked this question at the Community Focus Group and there was consensus to enlarge the heading. The new sign includes a large "Development Notice" heading, and relocates the City of Markham logo to the bottom left corner.
DSC	Change the date format to Month, Day, Year	The date format was changed to Month, Day, Year.

DSC	Are the icons clear? Do we need them?	Staff asked this question at the Community Focus Group and received positive feedback on the icons. One individual commented that Markham is the most diverse municipality in Canada and it is important for people who might not speak English to have this type of imagery. Another participant stated that the icons break up the text and help with overall readability of the signs.
		As a result of the positive feedback from Focus Group participants, the icons remain in the new sign. Some icons were revised, as suggested by participants at the Focus Group, to improve clarity.
DSC	Hyperlink should direct viewers to the Planning webpage	The hyperlink was changed from 'markham.ca' to 'markham.ca/eplanlogin' to provide a more direct link to development application information.
DSC	Remove the "Buildings Markham Future Together" slogan	The slogan was removed from the sign.
DSC	Disclaimer should read " and is subject to change"	This comment is addressed in the new sign design.
DSC	Remove "please reference" File Number	The file number will remain on the sign, but the signs will not request that viewers reference the file number. Viewers can reference the address or the file number when providing comments or asking questions about an application.
DSC	Support all this communication with options for other languages online	This will be considered as Staff explore opportunities to include more development application information online, including public notices.
Focus Group	Instead of saying "Visit us at markham.ca/eplanlogin", write "Search by address to find out more at markham.ca/eplanlogin"	This comment is addressed in the new sign design

DSC and Focus Group	More information on development applications should be available online and easily accessible	Currently, some information is available online through ePLAN; however, there is a desire to have more information available to the public through the City's website. The Planning Department is looking into this. When this occurs, the signs can be updated to include a QR code.
DSC and Focus Group	We heard from both members of DSC and members of the public at the Focus Group that they would like to see the signs full size in person.	To address this comment, Staff propose a 3-month pilot project. During this time, new posted notices will be developed using the new template. Temporary wording has been added to the bottom of the signs to welcome feedback. The text reads: "**How do you like our new signs? Email your comments to dsc@markham.ca**". At the end of the 3-month pilot project, Staff will compile any comments received, and if appropriate, make necessary changes to the posted notices. The temporary wording will be removed at this time.
DSC and Focus Group	Provide PDF copies of mailed notices to local councilors for distribution to our residents digitally. Provide PDF copies of notices to Resident Associations for distribution to members.	PDF copies of notices are emailed to members of Council by the Clerk's Department. The local Ward Councillor receives the 'Notice of Complete Application' and all members of Council receive every 'Notice of Public Meeting'. Residents within 200m of a subject property are circulated mailed notices. As outlined in this memo, more information on development applications, including all development application notices, will be made available online in the future.
DSC	Remove the legalese in the mailed notices.	Staff agree that the phrasing required by Section 5(11) para. 9 of O.Reg. 545/06 can be difficult to understand; however, it is wording that is required to be included in written public notices. The

		following paragraph has been added to improve readability: **That means if this [official plan amendment, zoning by-law amendment, draft plan of subdivision] is appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal and you would like to participate in the appeal in some form, you must make an oral submission at a public meeting, or submit written comments to the City Clerk, before the [official plan amendment is adopted, the zoning by-law amendment is passed, the draft plan of subdivision is approved] by Markham City Council.**

NEXT STEPS:

Staff recommend that the new development application public notices be endorsed by Council. The new notices are designed to better inform the community of active planning applications, and encourage public input. If endorsed by Council, Staff will begin the implementation process and initiate the 3-month pilot project in Q2 2021. Following the 3-month pilot project, Staff will review the Committee of Adjustment signs to identify where similar modifications and enhancements can be made.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Development Application Public Notice Improvements Memo– Nov. 9 DSC
Appendix B: Revised Posted Notice Templates
Appendix C: Revised Mailed Notice Templates