



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: April 21, 2021

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**SUBJECT:** Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan Study: Interim Report

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) That the report and presentation dated April 21, 2021 entitled “Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan Study: Interim Report” be received;
- 2) That the report dated April 21, 2021 entitled “Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan Study: Interim Report” be released for public consultation and input towards the preparation of the final demonstration plan;
- 3) That Council support the conversion of the Mount Joy Business Park employment lands, including the site-specific conversion request for 77 Anderson Avenue, from protected employment area to an appropriate mix of uses to be determined through this Study to allow for a broader mix of employment and non-employment uses; and
- 4) That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

A new secondary plan for the Markham Road – Mount Joy Local Corridor is required by the Markham Official Plan 2014. The intent of the new secondary plan is to guide the development of a new community that integrates a mix of uses and amenities (e.g., housing, employment, shopping, recreation and parks), and that will also serve as a centre for surrounding neighbourhoods. The secondary plan area boundary identified in the Official Plan 2014 was refined and is proposed to be expanded slightly, as shown in Figure 1, to include all of the Mount Joy GO Station lands so that redevelopment can be planned comprehensively.

The Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan Study was initiated in late 2019 as a first step to preparing the new secondary plan, and is being undertaken by an interdisciplinary team of consultants led by SvN Architects + Planners. The interim results of

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the multi-phased Study are presented in the Interim Report prepared by the consultant team, attached as Appendix 'A', which includes the recommended vision, guiding principles, draft demonstration plan and preliminary policy guidance that were presented in the update to the Development Services Committee (DSC) of Markham City Council on December 15, 2020. It is noted that minor technical revisions were made to the draft demonstration plan based on feedback received at, and following the DSC meeting.

The draft demonstration plan, shown in Figure 2, is based on a community structure comprising a restored and enhanced greenway system, mix of uses and densities, and an improved transportation network. It contemplates the highest buildings and densities near the GO stations, and along Markham Road between Major Mackenzie Drive East and Edward Jeffreys Avenue, with transitions to lower built forms and densities approaching the Wismer Commons and Greensborough neighbourhoods, as well as the Markham Village Heritage Conservation District, as shown in Figure 3. It also identifies: a Mixed Use Node at Mount Joy GO Station; other mixed use, residential, and employment areas; a future school site; parks and open space, as well as; the transformation of Markham Road into a main street, and the introduction of new streets and active transportation infrastructure to achieve the vision for a transit-oriented, connected and complete community.

Preliminary population and employment yields based on the land uses and densities identified in the draft demonstration plan anticipate approximately 13,500 residents and 14,500 jobs within the proposed secondary plan area at build out. Staff and the consultant team continue to review the preliminary yields and built form following feedback from DSC in December 2020.

The Interim Report is recommended for release as the basis of community consultation in Q2 2021 to inform potential changes to the final demonstration plan. Technical transportation, and municipal servicing modeling and analysis to test the feasibility of the draft demonstration plan, as well as refinement of the preliminary population and employment yields will be undertaken concurrently with consultation activities. The final demonstration plan and study report is expected to be presented to DSC in Q4 2021.

The re-designation of the employment area lands comprising the Mount Joy Business Park, including the lands at 77 Anderson Avenue that are the subject of a site-specific employment area conversion request to allow for a broader mix of employment uses and some non-employment uses, is also recommended and illustrated through the draft demonstration plan.

**PURPOSE:**

This report provides a summary of the work completed to date on the Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan Study (“the Study”), and results of the Interim Report prepared by the consultant team retained by the City, attached as Appendix 'A'.

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The report also brings forward a recommendation regarding the designation of the Mount Joy Business Park, including the lands at 77 Anderson Avenue that are the subject of a site-specific request to convert employment area lands to non-employment uses.

**BACKGROUND:****A new secondary plan for the Markham Road – Mount Joy Local Corridor is required to guide the development of a complete community at transit supportive densities**

The Markham 2014 Official Plan identifies the need for a new secondary plan for the Markham Road – Mount Joy Local Corridor. The intent of the new secondary plan is to guide the development of a new community that integrates a mix of uses and amenities (e.g., housing, employment, shopping, recreation and parks), and that will also serve as a centre for surrounding neighbourhoods. The new community will be developed at transit-supportive densities around the existing Mount Joy GO station, and potential station at Major Mackenzie Drive East.

The secondary plan area identified in the 2014 Official Plan is outlined in Figure 1 and includes lands along both sides of Markham Road from 16th Avenue in the south to Major Mackenzie Drive East in the north. The westerly limit of the secondary plan area is generally defined by the commercial properties on the west side of Markham Road, while the easterly limit is the Stouffville GO rail corridor. It is proposed that the Metrolinx-owned parking lot east of the railway corridor at Bur Oak Avenue be included in the secondary plan boundary to comprehensively plan the redevelopment of the Mount Joy GO Station lands, and reflect the proposed Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) boundary for Mount Joy GO Station, as described later in the report. The revised secondary plan area, also shown in Figure 1, is approximately 92.2 ha.

Lands within the secondary plan area are identified as a Local Corridor on Map 1 – Markham Structure in the Official Plan 2014. Local Corridors are intended to serve as main streets that provide a mix of uses to surrounding communities, and are part of the City's strategy for accommodating forecasted population and employment growth to 2031. A portion of the lands within the secondary plan area, centred around Mount Joy GO Station, are also delineated as an intensification area on Map 2 – Centres and Corridors and Transit Network, and prioritized for accommodating development at higher densities. Intensification within the corridor is well underway as demonstrated through the recent completion of several redevelopment projects, with more development anticipated based on a number of planning applications currently under review.

**A multi-phased Study, with ongoing opportunities for stakeholder and public input, was initiated to inform the preparation of the new secondary plan; the interim results summarized in this report mark the completion of Phase 3 of the Study**

The Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan Study was initiated in late 2019 as a first step to preparing the new secondary plan, and is being conducted by a multi-disciplinary consultant team led by SvN Architects + Planners. The Study integrates land

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use and urban design, transportation, and municipal servicing to comprehensively plan for a transit-oriented and complete community, and is being carried out in six phases:

- ✓ Phase 1 – Project Kick-Off
- ✓ Phase 2 – Background Review & Analysis
- **Phase 3 – Vision, Guiding Principles & Demonstration Plan [We Are Here]**
- Phase 4 – Community Consultation
- Phase 5 – Analysis and Recommendations
- Phase 6 – Final Study Report

The Study is at the end of Phase 3, which focused on the development of a vision, guiding principles, draft demonstration plan and recommended policy guidance. Phase 3 also included multiple opportunities for stakeholders and the public to learn about the results of the Phase 2 Background Review & Analysis, and provide input to the development of the vision, guiding principles and draft demonstration plan through the consultation events described below.

- Virtual Design Charrette – A virtual Design Charrette was convened through the Markham Sub-Committee and took place over three half-day sessions in the summer of 2020, as outlined below:
  - July 29, 2020 – Bus Tour and Overview of Baseline Conditions
  - August 5, 2020 – Workshop of Vision, Guiding Principles and Framework Plans
  - August 24, 2020 – Continuation of Workshop of Vision, Guiding Principles and Framework Plans
- Virtual Community Information Sessions – Two virtual community information sessions were also held to provide additional opportunities for participation on:
  - July 29, 2020 – Bus Tour and Overview of Baseline Conditions
  - September 26, 2020 – Workshop of Vision, Guiding Principles and Framework Plans

In total, approximately 350 people attended the Phase 3 consultation events.

The Interim Report prepared by the consultant team concludes Phases 1-3 of the Study and presents the recommended vision, guiding principles, draft demonstration plan, and preliminary policy guidance that was presented in the update to DSC on December 15, 2020.

#### **OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

**The draft demonstration plan identifies the mix and distribution of uses and densities, as well as the network of open spaces and transportation infrastructure to achieve the vision for a transit-oriented, connected and complete community, and**

**will serve as the basis of community consultation in the next phase of the Secondary Plan Study**

The Interim Report and draft demonstration plan, attached as Appendix ‘A’, are intended as the basis for community consultation during Phase 4 of the Study. Feedback obtained through the consultations as well as the results of technical modeling and analysis will inform the preparation of the final demonstration plan and study report.

Following completion of the Secondary Plan Study, a draft secondary plan will be prepared for Council adoption, which will include additional opportunities for stakeholder and public input through the statutory planning process.

The key components of the draft demonstration plan, as well as the draft vision and guiding principles that informed its preparation, are outlined below.

**Draft Vision and Guiding Principles**

Building on the land use objective for the Markham Road – Mount Joy Local Corridor in the Official Plan 2014, the draft vision and guiding principles were prepared in collaboration with the consultant team, and refined based on input from Council, stakeholders and the public.

**Draft Vision:**

The Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan area will evolve into a walkable, compact, and vibrant mixed-use community. It will also function as a gateway, main street, workplace, and social and cultural hub serving this community and the surrounding communities of Berczy Village, Wismer Commons, Greensborough, Swan Lake, and Markham Village.

To do so, a range and mix of housing, including affordable and rental housing, employment, shopping and recreation opportunities will be integrated and provided at transit-supportive densities that are compatible with the established low-rise residential neighbourhoods that border the new mixed use community. The greatest intensity of development and activity will be near the GO rail stations, complemented by animated parks, schools, community and recreation facilities, and other amenities.

All these elements are intended to be tied together and enriched with a vibrant public realm that will drive the appeal, livability, resilience and distinct sense of place of the Markham Road – Mount Joy area.

**Guiding Principles:**

The following guiding principles provide a framework to achieve the vision, and are expanded on in Appendix ‘A’:

1. Building Compact and Complete, Rail-Integrated Communities
2. Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment
3. Increasing Mobility Options
4. Maintaining a Vibrant and Competitive Economy

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5. Adopting Green Infrastructure and Development Standards
  6. Facilitating Public Input and Long-Range Planning and Implementation

### **Draft Demonstration Plan**

The draft demonstration plan, shown in Figure 2, builds on the vision and guiding principles, and was prepared through an iterative and collaborative process with input from the Markham Sub-Committee, City departments, stakeholders (e.g., Metrolinx, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, York Region District School Board, landowners and/or their representatives) and the public.

The draft demonstration plan identifies the mix and distribution of uses and densities, as well as the open space and transportation network, required to achieve the vision for a transit-oriented, connected and complete community that meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors. It is noted that minor technical revisions based on the feedback received at, and following the December 2020 DSC meeting were incorporated in the draft demonstration plan.

The key structuring elements of the draft demonstration plan comprise a:

- Restored and Enhanced Greenway System
- Mix of Uses and Range of Densities
  - Mount Joy GO Station Mixed Use Node
  - Mixed Use and Residential Areas
  - Future School Site
  - Mixed Use Employment Hub
  - Parks and Open Space
- Improved Transportation Network
  - New Streets and Infrastructure
  - Markham Road
  - Direct Connection to the Potential Station at Major Mackenzie Drive East

These elements are described in more detail below.

*Restored and Enhanced Greenway System* – The Study included the evaluation of five (5) options to re-align Mount Joy Creek to address flood hazards and enhance the Greenway System in the northern portion of the proposed secondary plan area. A hybrid option comprising a piped and open channel system adjacent to the railway corridor performed the best in the evaluation and was therefore included in the draft demonstration plan as the preliminary recommended alignment. It will convey Mount Joy Creek east in a pipe from where the recently re-naturalized open channel currently ends east of Markham Road to the railway corridor and then southward in an open channel within the 30m railway corridor buffer. Although all the options examined were designed to convey the Regional Flood event, benefits of the preliminary recommended alignment also include: increasing the proportion of Mount Joy Creek conveyed in an open channel system, improving and/or restoring wildlife habitat, and creating opportunities for placemaking, recreation, and active transportation through the co-location of a multi-use pathway west of the channel within the 30m railway corridor. While structures are not permitted within

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the 30m railway corridor buffer, the preliminary recommendation for an open channel system will impact some existing land uses, such as parking. Further study, consultation and detailed design work in the future will therefore be needed to implement any re-alignment of Mount Joy Creek.

*Mix of Uses and Range of Densities* – A mix of uses and range of densities are contemplated throughout the proposed secondary plan area as follows:

- Mount Joy Go Station Mixed Use Node – The Mount Joy GO Station lands, including the surface parking lot east of the railway corridor, are proposed for redevelopment as a Mixed Use Node. The greatest intensity of development and activity are proposed within this node to create an anchor as well as catalyze the creation of a destination comprising a mix of housing, jobs, and amenities. The most significant building heights (up to 45 storeys) and densities, are therefore proposed in this location.
- Mixed Use and Residential Areas – The second highest level of intensity and development, generally 20 to 40 storeys, is planned within the Mixed Use High Rise areas, as shown in Figure 3, on the lands immediately south of Major Mackenzie Drive East, between Markham Road and the railway corridor and to support the potential GO Station recommended on the north side of Major Mackenzie Drive East.

Lands along the length of Markham Road between Major Mackenzie Drive East and Edward Jeffreys Avenue are also planned as Mixed Use High Rise areas, with development ranging from 15 to 30 storeys. The Markham Road corridor from just north of Castlemore Avenue to Edward Jeffreys Avenue is also identified as primary retail frontage to encourage the activity and street life needed to transform Markham Road into a main street.

Building heights and densities are proposed to decrease east and west of Markham Road toward the existing Wismer Commons and Greensborough communities. The Mixed Use Mid Rise areas (with development up to 11 storeys), and Residential Mid Rise areas (with development up to 3 storeys) identified to the rear of the Mixed Use High Rise areas fronting onto Markham Road will provide a transition in built form and use as well as activity to the low rise neighbourhoods.

A similar decrease in height and density is also proposed between Edward Jeffreys Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue to transition to the Markham Village Heritage Conservation District south of the proposed secondary plan area. It is anticipated that this area, which is identified predominately for Mixed Use Mid Rise development (up to 11 storeys), will be among the last to redevelop, and retain some of the existing population serving and retail uses.

- Future School Site – A proposed elementary school site is identified north of Castlemore Avenue between the railway corridor and future extension of

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Anderson Avenue. The potential for integration of the school site within the podium of a mixed-use development, will be pursued with the school board. A public park is proposed in close proximity to the school site on the west side of the Anderson Avenue extension.

- Parks and Open Space – Six new parks ranging in size from 0.3 ha to 2.7 ha are proposed to be distributed throughout the proposed secondary plan area and provide a variety of active and passive recreational uses to meet the diverse needs of residents and visitors. Additional amenity space will be provided through a system of privately-owned publicly accessible spaces (e.g., courtyards, plazas, etc.) as well as open spaces adjacent to Mount Joy Creek, and the multi-use pathway proposed along the railway corridor from Major Mackenzie Drive East in the north to 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the south.
- Mixed Use Employment Hub – In addition to the retail and population-serving jobs that will be dispersed across the mixed use areas, the existing Mount Joy Business Park, located immediately north of Mount Joy GO Station, is planned to be transformed into a mixed use employment hub. The intent of the employment hub is to provide for a mix of light industrial and commercial uses at-grade that are capable of co-existing with a diverse range of employment and residential uses on upper-storeys. Diversifying the range of employment uses and allowing for some residential uses within the employment hub enables intensification of the lands at transit-supportive densities while ensuring a suitable mix of uses to meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors. Both sides of Anderson Avenue, from Bur Oak Avenue to just south of Castlemore Avenue, are also identified as primary employment frontage to encourage street life and activity near the GO Station.

#### *Improved Transportation Network Including Active Transportation*

- New Streets and Infrastructure – The existing transportation network is proposed to be improved through the introduction of a number of new collector streets, local streets, and signalized intersections. Infrastructure to support active transportation, such as protected bicycle lanes, multi-use pathways, mid-block crossings and two pedestrian bridges over the railway corridor, is also proposed. The improved network provides for additional and alternate route choices to Markham Road, smaller blocks and increased connectivity throughout the new community, and encourages walking and cycling. Further study and design work will be needed to confirm the location and architecture of the pedestrian bridges.
- Markham Road – Markham Road is intended to evolve into a vibrant main street, connecting the neighbourhoods to the east and west through a ‘spine’ of activity and services. To support this transformation, the following changes are recommended and subject to further study and design through a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment and/or Streetscape Design Study:

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- Optimizing the existing roadway width by providing for a central median / turning lane, and up to two travel lanes per direction; and
  - Incorporating protected bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and landscaping and street furniture within the municipal right-of-way.

It is also recommended that development fronting onto either side of Markham Road be set back a minimum of 5.0 m to provide space for spill-over uses (e.g., patios, etc.), and to frame the street proportionally with built form to create an appropriate and desirable sense of scale and enclosure.

- Direct Connection to the Potential GO Station at Major Mackenzie Drive East – Analysis completed through this Study determined that a potential GO Station at Major Mackenzie Drive East is feasible and should continue to be protected for as more detailed studies required by Metrolinx are undertaken (i.e., Population and Ridership Forecasts, Initial Business Case). The location of the potential station is recommended on the north side of Major Mackenzie Drive East with direct connections to the Markham Road – Mount Joy community under Major Mackenzie Drive East. In addition to the studies required by Metrolinx noted above, the location and built form of the station and platform will need to meet criteria in the Greenbelt Plan, specifically in relation to the Little Rouge Creek Corridor.

### **Preliminary Population and Job Yields**

Preliminary yields based on the land uses and densities identified in the draft demonstration plan anticipate approximately 13,500 residents and 14,500 jobs within the proposed secondary plan area at build out. Staff and the consultant team continue to review the preliminary yields. The yields will also be tested through consultation activities as well as the technical modeling and analysis that will take place in Phases 4 and 5 of the Study.

### **Staff support a broader mix of employment and non-employment uses on the Mount Joy Business Park lands**

The draft demonstration plan establishes a framework for the Markham Road – Mount Joy Local Corridor to evolve into a transit-oriented, mixed use, complete and connected community. To support this evolution and ensure transit-supportive development on the lands surrounding Mount Joy GO Station, particularly within the Mount Joy Business Park, staff are supportive of broadening the mix and intensity of permitted uses in the Business Park, including allowing for some residential uses, while retaining employment as a priority.

Staff are therefore supportive of the site-specific employment area conversion request by the landowner of 77 Anderson Avenue, which is adjacent to the GO Station, and recommend that Council support the conversion request and the re-designation of all of the lands currently designated ‘Service Employment’ in the Mount Joy Business Park to an appropriate mixed use designation to be determined through this Study.

## **NEXT STEPS**

**The next steps in the Secondary Plan Study process include circulation of the Interim Report for stakeholder and community consultation, and undertaking technical modeling and analysis to inform the preparation of the final study and demonstration plan**

Following Council endorsement of the recommendations in this report, the community consultation identified in Phase 4 of the Study will be initiated to obtain feedback on the Interim Report and draft demonstration plan.

The technical transportation, and municipal servicing analysis identified in Phase 5 of the Study, as well as refinement of the preliminary population and employment yields, will be conducted in parallel with Phase 4 to test the feasibility of the draft demonstration plan and identify necessary infrastructure improvements.

The results of Phases 4 and 5 of the Secondary Plan Study will be used to finalize the demonstration plan and prepare the final study report, which will be brought back to DSC at the end of Phase 6 in Q4 2021.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

The Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan Study is being undertaken by an interdisciplinary team of City staff and consultants. Funding for the Study was approved in the 2019 Capital Budget.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:**

Not applicable.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

The draft demonstration plan presents a vision for the Markham Road – Mount Joy community that is consistent with the City's 2014 Official Plan and Goal 3 – Safe, Sustainable and Complete Community in Building Markham's Future Together, 2020-2023.

## **BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Staff from Planning and Urban Design, Transportation, and Environmental Engineering were consulted in the drafting of this report.

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

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Arvin Prasad, M.C.I.P., R.P.P  
Commissioner of Development Services

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Biju Karumanchery, M.C.I.P., R.P.P  
Director, Planning & Urban Design

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Figure 1: Secondary Plan Area and Mount Joy GO Major Transit Station Area Boundaries
- Figure 2: Draft Demonstration Plan
- Figure 3: Land Use Framework

Appendix 'A': Markham Road – Mount Joy Secondary Plan Study: Interim Report, April 2021