



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: September 12, 2022

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION REPORT, City of Markham – Age-Friendly Design Guidelines

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) THAT the report titled, “ City of Markham – Age-Friendly Design Guidelines” be received;
- 2) AND THAT the guidelines outlined in the “City of Markham – Age-Friendly Design Guidelines” (Appendix 1) be endorsed for implementation through the development review process;
- 3) AND THAT Staff be directed to form a Staff Working Group to prepare a Request for Proposal and retain a consultant to complete a cost analysis of implementing the “City of Markham – Age-Friendly Design Guidelines” in the public realm and report back to Development Services Committee;
- 4) AND THAT the guidelines in the “City of Markham – Age-Friendly Design Guidelines” applicable to the public realm be implemented once the cost analysis is completed and presented to the DSC;
- 5) AND THAT minor amendments to the “City of Markham – Age-Friendly Design Guidelines” be made subject to the Development Services Commissioner’s approval;
- 6) AND THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

According to the Province of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors (2017), Seniors (65 years and older) are the fastest-growing age group in Ontario. By 2041, it is projected that 25% of Ontario's population will be 65 years or older, doubling from 2.3 million seniors in 2016 to 4.6 million seniors. Markham is no exception. Older adults are also the fastest growing segment of Markham's population, a trend that will likely continue over the next decade. At the same time as the population is aging, the City of Markham is growing and the built environment is changing.

Given Markham's significant growth in population and changes to the built environment, it is critical that the way we plan and design our homes and communities also shift towards age-friendly design where buildings, public spaces, and infrastructure are designed to address the needs of all residents, from young children to families to older adults.

While much of the literature around age-friendly planning and design is focused on the needs of older adults, Markham also recognizes the growing needs of families with young children and youths, especially with the shift towards higher-density living in our intensification areas. As such, a broader, more inclusive definition of age-friendly must also include the needs of children, youth, families, people with varying abilities and older adults.

This report provides an overview of the City of Markham Age-Friendly Design Guidelines (Appendix 1) including policy review and gap analysis, case studies and stakeholder engagement, and provides a summary of key considerations for implementation which aims to help Markham continue to grow as an age-friendly city through design.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to recommend Council adoption of the City of Markham Age-Friendly Design Guidelines ("the Guidelines") to help guide the design of new development.

BACKGROUND:Age-Friendly Design in Markham

Age-friendly design is not new to Markham. Development Services staff have historically demonstrated leadership through different forms of age-friendly design in recent years, including successful negotiations with developers through development approvals to include age-friendly design considerations in new housing on a voluntary basis, such as:

- Provision for secondary suites
- Elevator rough-ins from basement level to top floors of townhouses

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- Structural supports for future retrofits for porches and internal stairs to accommodate installation of chair lifts or ramps
 - Master bedrooms with full bathrooms layouts on main floor units
 - Elimination of exterior steps for at-grade residential units
 - Senior-focused amenity spaces within high density developments
 - Outdoor children play space and equipment as part of private amenity space designs

The Age-Friendly Design Guidelines builds on this demonstrated implementation of age-friendly considerations to develop city-wide design guidance.

In addition, the City has recently updated its Markham Accessibility Design Guidelines to reflect current Provincial accessibility legislative requirements and standards. These include developing accessible environments for all and embracing the principles of universal design. While the Accessibility Design Guidelines focuses specifically on people with disabilities for private and public indoor and outdoor spaces, the guidance can support the needs of young children and older adults. These guidelines are mandatory for all new construction and renovations to City owned and leased buildings, and City staff have consistently worked with members of the development industry through the development approval process to implement accessible design.

Policy Review and Gap Analysis

A number of policy documents were reviewed as part of the initial phases of the study, including the Ontario Building Code (OBC), Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), York Region Seniors Strategy, City of Markham Official Plan, and the City of Markham Older Adult Strategy. For a complete list of policy documents reviewed as part of the study and summary of the gap analysis, refer to Markham Age-Friendly Design Guidelines – Stage 2 Background Report (Appendix 2).

Current legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines primarily address accessibility requirements in the built environment for people with disabilities, but there is limited direction related to buildings and outdoor spaces that cater to the needs of older adults and families with young children. Fortunately, accessibility guidelines geared to people with disabilities often include design interventions that are applicable or transferable to older adults and children. While best practice approaches to planning and designing inclusive communities in the City of Markham focus on accessibility standards and design considerations for City-led renovations and new construction of buildings and public spaces, guidance on age-friendly practices for private development is limited.

The Age-Friendly Design Guidelines aims to bridge the gap between current legislation, regulations and standards, with design-specific interventions, bringing age-friendly design to the forefront in the planning and design of new homes and communities.

Age-Friendly Design Case Studies

A number of local, national and international case studies were reviewed to inform the initial development of the Guidelines, providing built form, policy and program ideas. These included a number of guidelines, strategies and policies with varying areas of focus related to children or older adults in ground related or vertical communities, in addition to age-friendly neighbourhood structure. For a complete list of studies reviewed, refer to Markham Age-Friendly Design Guidelines – Stage 2 Background Report (Appendix 2).

Most of the age-friendly case studies reviewed focused on neighbourhood structure, parks and public realm, with limited case studies addressing design-specific recommendations for housing at the unit or building scale. Through the implementation of the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines, the City of Markham has a unique opportunity to be at the forefront of the age-friendly initiative as it relates to housing and public space design for all ages and abilities.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout the course of the study, the project team engaged with City staff, Council, development industry, stakeholders and members of the community to understand current City standards, policies and practices, the daily needs of residents, and current barriers and opportunities for age-friendly design in the community.

A comprehensive engagement strategy was developed early on to ensure a broader public audience of older adults, families, children and youth could be reached to determine what matters most and to better understand perceptions of age-friendly design. Multiple engagement channels were implemented throughout the course of the study, including:

- Stakeholder workshops with members of the development industry through the “City Builders Forum”
- Virtual public open house events
- Library outreach including in-person surveys, poster boards and bookmarks
- Online engagement through YourVoice Markham, online survey and interactive “0-99 Ideas Challenge”
- One-on-one interviews with subject matter and community experts
- Meetings with committees and groups

For more details on the engagement timeline, process and key findings, refer to Markham Age-Friendly Design Guidelines – Engagement Summary Report (Appendix 3).

Below is a summary of key stakeholders consulted throughout the course of the study.

Technical Advisory Committee

Regular meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) were held in order to better understand and align City priorities in both the development and implementation of the Guidelines. This cross-departmental group with members from Urban Design, Development Planning, Zoning and Special Projects, Plans Review and Building

Standards, Operations, Policy, Parks and Open Space Development, Transportation Planning and Recreation Services provided technical input and insight into related processes, priorities and potential challenges of the study, and to review final draft Guidelines.

Senior Advisory Committee & Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham

Meetings were held with the City of Markham Seniors Advisory Committee (SAC) and Committee for an Age Friendly Markham (AFC) at key milestones throughout the study to learn more about their concerns related to age-friendly design in Markham, identify opportunities and challenges of the built environment, and to share their visions and aspirations on an age-friendly Markham. Follow up meetings were held to obtain feedback on the draft Guidelines.

Markham Mayor Youth Council

During the pre-engagement phase, the project team met with City of Markham Mayor's Youth Council (MMYC) to introduce the project, hear about their ideas related to age-friendly design in Markham. An interactive online workshop was held with the group, where input was provided on how to capture the youth voice in Markham, to identify any age-friendly spaces in Markham, and how to make Markham a more age-friendly city.

Development Industry

An interactive workshop was held with invited members of Markham's development community through the "City Builders Forum" to share information about the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines process, get a better understanding about current and future projects in Markham; market trends and the demand for age-friendly housing; and any barriers (both experienced or anticipated) in the provision of age-friendly housing in Markham and around the Greater Toronto Area. Follow up meetings were held to obtain feedback on the draft Guidelines.

Expert Interviews

In order to better understand some of the key industry trends, drivers, opportunities and challenges facing Markham in its quest to become a more age-friendly city, a series of one-on-one interviews were held with key experts from around the region involved in the creation of age-friendly built environments. The interviewees included:

- Christine Lolley, Principal, Solares Architecture
- Linda Kafka, Director, Living in Place Network
- Jeanhy Shim, President, Housing Lab Toronto
- Nicole Reiss, Housing Planner, York Region

DISCUSSION:

Purpose of the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines

The Guidelines provide recommendations for the design of neighbourhoods, buildings, units and sites to guide new development and support the retrofit of existing built form into safe, accessible places for people of all ages. The Guidelines will serve as an implementation tool

for achieving the City's objective of building healthy, sustainable and complete communities that responds to the needs of all residents, from young children and families to older adults.

The intent of these city-wide guidelines is to integrate age-friendly design into the built environment in new and redeveloping communities, including privately-owned low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise residential and mixed use buildings and neighbourhoods.

Overview of Age-Friendly Design Guidelines

Through text, images, diagrams and photo precedents, the Guideline focuses on the following three key areas:

- Ground related communities (including low-rise residential such as single-detached, semi-detached and townhouse dwellings)
- Vertical communities (including medium- to high-density residential or mixed-use buildings)
- Age-friendly neighbourhood structure (including parks and streets)

The Guidelines address three scales of development: the neighbourhood, the building/site, and the unit.

Neighbourhood Guidelines

These guidelines explore how neighbourhood design can encourage connectivity, mobility, safety and livability to incorporate services and amenities that meet the needs of users of all age groups. The majority of the guidelines within this section apply to lands owned by the City, such as streets and parks, to be implemented through planning approvals and capital projects.

Building & Site Design Guidelines

This section explores how the design of residential buildings can ensure they meet the changing needs of residents of all ages, including places to socialize, play, work and learn. The guidelines are categorized as ground-related residential buildings, multi-unit residential buildings, mixed-use buildings with commercial uses and community facilities. The majority of the guidelines in this section apply to private lands, to be implemented through the site plan and subdivision approvals.

Unit Guidelines

This section explores how the design of individual units can meet the needs of a variety of users of all ages over time, including the needs of different family sizes, types and configurations. These guidelines address the many ways in which interior adjustments to the unit layout, fixtures, and finishes can assist in providing comfortable, efficient, and supportive unit design – allowing people of all ages and abilities to live in their homes as they move through different cycles of life.

Together, the design guidance provided in the three different scales positively contributes to how we live, work and play in our communities. Appendix 4 summarizes the chapter headings, key themes and sub-headings in the Guideline.

Application of the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines

The Guidelines apply city-wide, and is intended to provide guidance for the development industry, designers and City staff in the preparation and subsequent review of development applications. The Guidelines may also be used by City staff to inform planning frameworks and in the design and construction of new parks, public spaces, community facilities and streetscapes. The Guidelines may also be useful for members of the public and community groups, as well as organizations such as condominium boards and rental property managers who are interested in gathering information on age-friendly ideas for both personal interest, use, and advocacy work.

The Guidelines are meant to be read in conjunction with other city-wide design guidelines, standards and policies. As a living document, the Guidelines will evolve over time to meet best practices and future changes that may be related to standards and requirements from key provincial legislation and municipal policies, such as but not limited to, the Planning Act, Ontario Building Code, and Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Where guidelines are found to be in conflict with provincial legislation or regulations, those minimum requirements take precedence over the recommendations in the Guidelines.

Implementation

The Guidelines may be implemented at appropriate stages of the planning and design approval process in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Act, including subdivision approval, zoning by-law amendment, site plan approval and architectural control review. Staff will inform applicants of the objectives and applicability of the Guidelines during the early pre-consultation stages of the development review process, to ensure age-friendly design is considered early on, in the initial stages of concept development.

Age-friendly designs and features may also be considered as part of capital improvement projects and retrofits to existing streets, parks and public open spaces, with due considerations to maintenance and life-cycle needs.

There will be further opportunities to increase the reach of the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines by incorporating elements of the guidelines into existing and new planning policies when appropriate, such as during statutory reviews, policy updates and amendments.

Future Updates

The Guidelines are envisioned as a living document, intended to be updated as required, to ensure new and amended provincial legislative requirements, City policies, standards,

and initiatives are incorporated. The updates will ensure the latest planning and design trends are also being reflected in the Guidelines.

Staff recommend that where required, minor amendments to the Guidelines can be made subject to the Development Services Commissioner's approval.

Limitations of the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines

Unlike policy or bylaws, guidelines are not mandatory. The intent of the Guidelines is to achieve best outcomes for improving the quality of life for people of all ages living in Markham. While the guidelines are meant to be applied holistically, the City recognizes that development is contextual and that opportunities to implement guidelines may occur on a project-by-project basis. The Guidelines are meant to provide flexibility in its interpretation rather than being prescriptive.

Also, municipalities do not have the authority under the Planning Act to review and approve the design of building interiors. The minimum requirements for interior layouts are set out in the Ontario Building Code (OBC) and any design guidance in the Guidelines above and beyond OBC, will be encouraged by City staff during the review process, but will be implemented by the development industry and applicants on a voluntary basis.

Furthermore, some of the guidelines related to the units are intended to enhance flexibility during design and construction, and to provide direction for retrofits by home owners as their needs change. These guidelines are not intended to require all units be custom built for residents with specific long term disabilities. While the guidelines are intended to be holistic, they have not been reviewed by health care professionals and the recommendations in these guidelines are not intended to replace guidance from health care professionals. Members of the public should seek advice from appropriate health care professionals and/or building industry professionals, as needed, to assess the required retrofits to their homes and units to address disability.

Recommendations by the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham

On December 8, 2020, Development Services Committee (DSC) received a Staff recommendation report titled "Recommendation Report, Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Community" to discuss twelve (12) recommendations deemed to be within the jurisdiction of the municipality that were recommended by the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham. In accordance with the resolution (attached as Appendix 5) adopted at the December 8, 2020 DSC Meeting, staff were directed to report back to DSC on the Age-Friendly Design Guideline once the guidelines were completed.

Out of the twelve (12) Committee Recommendations, two (2) have been further reviewed in the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines, specifically:

1. **'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:

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- 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.”

2. **‘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.”

Chapters 2.0 and 3.0 of the Age-Friendly Design Guidelines include guidance that address the ‘Always Homes’ Guidelines’ and ‘Home Elevator & Chair Lifts – New Homes’ recommendations made by the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham. More specifically:

- Section 2.1.1 of the Guidelines provides guidance on a no-step / zero threshold access to the main entrance
- Section 2.1.2 of the Guidelines provides guidance on providing primary living spaces, including a bedroom with full bath, on the ground floor
- Section 2.2.5 of the Guidelines provides guidance on the door lever types
- Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 of the Guidelines provides guidance on improved kitchen and bathroom designs to accommodate older adults with limited abilities
- Section 3.3.2 of the Guidelines includes guidance on additional support rails and platform lifts, as well as planning for the location of an elevator for future installation if needed

While several of the Committee’s recommendations are addressed through the Guidelines, it should be noted that the City has limitations on what can be required through Planning approvals, including the interior layout and design of buildings. The OBC provides minimum requirements, including barrier-free paths of travel.

Cost Implications of Building an Age-Friendly Community

A number of guidelines in the document are ideas to be considered in the public realm, including new streets and parks, which the City’s policies and budget do not currently fund or support. As a result, several guidelines may have financial implications on the City’s capital budget, and operations and maintenance costs and will require appropriate funding for maintenance and lifecycle cost.

Over the course of the study, several members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) including the City’s Operations and Parks Development Group, have noted the following concerns, including:

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- Providing additional benches will impact capital and future operational and maintenance cost
 - Introducing year-round use of parks will have significant operational and maintenance implications
 - Providing washrooms in neighborhood parks will impact capital and future operational and maintenance costs
 - Providing lighting at night, dawn and dusk in parks will significantly increase capital, operation and maintenance costs
 - Wider non-standard sidewalk widths will impact capital and future operational and maintenance costs
 - Additional pedestrian crossings will increase operational and maintenance costs
 - Providing bicycle repair stations will require increased capital budget and increased operational and maintenance costs

These concerns were acknowledged by the project team. However, as guidelines are aspirational, long-term and forward-looking, removal of these items from the guidelines entirely were not recommended as it would diminish the overall integrity of the Guidelines. Moreover, the Guidelines were prepared in response to feedback and aspirations from stakeholders and community members, and reflect some of the current best practices. As such, it is recommended that further review on the cost implications be addressed following Council adoption of the Guidelines, as noted below.

Recommendation to Form a New Staff Working Group

With Council endorsement of the Guidelines, it is recommended that the implementation of age-friendly design guidelines within the public realm (owned and/or maintained by the City) be implemented only once a cross-Commission staff working group is formed to review the cost implications by applying the Guidelines to a demonstration site. The working group may be comprised of staff from various departments including: Urban Design, Parks Development, Development Planning, Policy Planning, Operations, Capital Works, and Finance.

Recommendation to Undertake a Costing Analysis on a Demonstration Site

Understanding that the implementation of the age-friendly guidelines is context sensitive, it is recommended that an area within Markham Centre be selected to demonstrate the capital, operations and maintenance costs associated with implementing age-friendly designs in the public realm. Staff recommends that procurement for the costing analysis commence in 2023, following completion of the Markham Centre Secondary Plan update.

Led by the new staff working group, Staff recommends preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) that identifies a demonstration site, scope of work, timeline and budget to hire an external consultant to undertake this work that includes, but not limited to, the following:

- Recommending appropriate age-friendly designs for the demonstration site
- Preparing a cost analysis

- Providing an evaluation and comparative analysis between age-friendly design and base condition scenarios
- Reporting back to DSC on key findings and recommendations

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The implementation of certain guidelines in the public realm will have financial implications, including increasing capital, operation and maintenance budgets.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This report supports the City's efforts to ensure we build an inclusive, livable, caring and culturally vibrant community, and achieve complete communities with an excellent quality of life which are some of the key elements of Markham's strategic priorities related to: Engaged, Diverse and Thriving City, and Safe and Sustainable Community.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Urban Design, Development Planning, Parks Development, Policy Planning, Transportation, Operations, Zoning and Special Projects, Recreation Services, and Building Standards have been consulted in the preparation of Age-Friendly Design Guidelines.

RECOMMENDED BY:

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ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix 1 – Draft Markham Age-Friendly Design Guidelines
Appendix 2 – 'Markham Age Friendly Design Guidelines: Stage 2 Background Report',
by Urban Strategies Inc., February 2022

Appendix 3 – ‘Markham Age Friendly Design Guidelines: Engagement Summary Report’, by Urban Strategies Inc., March 2022

Appendix 4 – Organization of Markham Age-Friendly Design Guidelines

Appendix 5 – Council Resolution on the Age Friendly Community dated December 8, 2020