

SUBJECT: Planning and Urban Design Department – 2023 Work Plan

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report entitled, “Planning and Urban Design Department – 2023 Work Plan” be received;
2. AND THAT staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present Council with an overview of the Planning and Urban Design Departments 2023 work program. This is the first annual Planning and Urban Design departmental work plan being presented to Council and is intended to illustrate the various inter-disciplinary projects, initiatives and resources being advanced to support Markham’s vision for a healthy and complete community.

BACKGROUND/ DISCUSSION:

The following provides an overview and brief summary of each initiative undertaken by various teams in the Planning and Urban Design Department. These initiatives are inclusive of obligations to meet recent provincial legislative changes introduced by Bill 109, Bill 23, and Bill 97, statutory requirements. These initiatives also implement Council Resolutions and requests to Staff, and to meet Building Markham's Future Together Strategic Plan. A table is provided in “Appendix A” with detailed information on initiative’s current status, and anticipated completion time.

City-wide Urban Design Guidelines

Urban Design Staff are currently updating the City-wide Urban Design Guideline (UDG), which provides consistent design direction and guidance to help shape Markham into an urban, sustainable, healthy, and complete City. The purpose of the updated City-wide UDG, which will be read in conjunction with the policies of the Official Plan and the requirements of various regulatory documents, is threefold. First, to respond to recent provincial legislative changes by setting clear expectations and consistent direction for preferred design and development outcomes that achieve functional and attractive design. Secondly, to visually articulate the design objectives of the City's Official Plan (OP).

Finally, to provide guidance to landowners, development industry and City staff in the preparation and review of development plans, applications and proposals.

Bird Friendly Guidelines update

The current Bird Friendly Guidelines were endorsed by Council in 2014 to ensure existing and new buildings implement mitigation measures to minimize bird strikes in Markham. Urban Design Staff are currently updating the Guidelines and Specifications Checklist to reflect new best management practices for bird-friendly building and site design. The outcome would improve City standards for site plan applications in order to manage bird-window collisions.

Sun & Shadow Analysis Terms of Reference update

Urban Design Staff are currently updating the Sun & Shadow Analysis Terms of Reference (TOR) to improve the evaluation of shadow impacts created by proposed developments on adjacent properties and the public realm. The update will establish the requirements for the impact of incremental and cumulative shadow impacts cast by a proposed development on its surrounding context. Staff are also reviewing the need to include a data-supported analysis to quantify and evaluate sunlight and shadow impacts.

Official Plan and Secondary Plans

Policy planning staff manage the 2014 Markham Official Plan (OP) in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Planning Act, respond to provincial land use related legislation (i.e. Bill 23, Bill 97), complete research on special projects, develop programs/tools and support other land use planning matters.

The OP is a visionary document that establishes the planning framework to guide growth and development within the City. The department also undertakes Secondary Plans as required by the OP. There are currently 5 active secondary plans studies underway and 2 more in the pre-planning/procurement stage.

For 2023, a major initiative will be the launch of an update to the 2014 Markham Official Plan. The specific approach, scope and timing of the update is still being determined, but conformity with the 2022 York Region Official Plan and the new Provincial Planning Statement in development by the Province will be addressed.

Affordable and Rental Housing

Planning Policy staff are working on the implementation of Markham's Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy (AHS). Staff are currently working on the following policy initiatives, Action 3 - Develop an Inclusionary Zoning By-law for Major Transit Station Areas and Action 10 - Use Public Lands for Affordable Housing. Further, research is also being undertaken on student housing to respond to a Council resolution.

In addition to the work on AHS, staff are also exploring a submission to the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) initiative that was developed by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to provide incentive funding to local governments to support initiatives aimed at increasing the supply of housing. Staff will be reporting on this initiative in June 2023.

Sustainability Metrics Program

Council endorsed the Sustainability Metrics as Markham's green development standard in [May 2022](#). The intent of the Sustainability Metrics is to improve the sustainability of new construction by being integrated in the development application review process. It is complementary to third-party green building certification systems such as [LEED](#), [Energy Star](#) for New Homes, and [Passive House](#). The Sustainability Metrics implement Council's direction in the Municipal Energy Plan to improve building energy performance and in the Official Plan, 2014 relating to sustainable development as set out in section 6.2.

Staff will implement the Sustainability Metrics to require site plan and plan of subdivision applications to achieve minimum sustainability scores. Markham will join municipal partners (Brampton, Vaughan and Richmond Hill) in implementing the Sustainability Metrics Program.

Following [Council's endorsement of a pathway to net zero energy buildings](#), staff will also prepare a future Recommendation Report to Council to confirm energy performance standards for new construction and a verification approach. This will include consultations with development stakeholders.

Natural Heritage Management Study

The Natural Heritage Management Study will identify and recommend best management practices to systematically maintain and enhance the ecological value of natural areas in the Greenway System. In particular, the study will identify techniques and methods to address invasive species, edge management and ecological enhancement methods.

There are about 1,000 hectares of City-owned lands in the Greenway System. As a major landowner of natural areas, the City is responsible for maintaining and protecting ecological values and ecosystems on these lands. Natural areas in urban settings are at risk of ecological degradation over time due to climate change, human use and invasive species. There are opportunities to improve and enhance the City's natural areas with restoration and native vegetation. By documenting current habitat condition and risk to the Greenway System, the Natural Heritage Management Study will deliver management guidelines to enhance City-owned natural areas.

Natural Assets Inventory and Evaluation

Natural assets are ecological features such as wetlands, woodlands, valley lands and riparian areas that generally comprise the Greenway System in Markham. The Natural Assets Inventory and Evaluation study will integrate natural assets as non-core assets into the City's Asset Management Plan. Furthermore, a focus on natural assets to connect asset management planning and land use planning will strengthen policy direction in the upcoming revision of the Official Plan to improve the protection, maintenance and enhancement of natural assets. This is of particular importance when considering the risks to natural assets from urban growth and climate change, and the opportunities to identify nature-based solutions provided by natural assets for climate mitigation and adaptation.

There are two goals of the Natural Assets Inventory and Evaluation study. A primary goal is to meet the requirements of O. Reg. 588/17 with respect to identification, assigning condition rating and determining levels of service of natural assets, to achieve a basic level of asset management practice. O. Reg. 588/17 requires that municipalities prepare asset management plans with respect to core municipal infrastructure assets (e.g. water supply, wastewater, stormwater management, etc.) and non-core municipal assets. Compliance with O. Reg. 588/17 will focus on the approximately 1,000 hectares of City-owned natural assets. A secondary goal is to inform long range planning initiatives related to growth management such as improved financial planning to enhance asset condition and ecosystem services as well as informing the Official Plan review. The entire Greenway System is the focus of this aspect of the study in order to inform the Official Plan review.

Ecological Restoration of City-owned Lands

The ecological restoration program will undertake reforestation projects within city-owned natural areas. Approximately 11,000 plants and 4 hectares of land are targeted for reforestation in 2023.

This program utilizes cash-in-lieu payments paid by development proponents where trees and natural heritage features that are not considered significant are approved to be removed in accordance with official plan policies and Council direction. The purpose is to replant trees and natural heritage features to 'offset' those that are lost as a result of development approvals. This program supports Council's 30% tree canopy target and the natural heritage objectives of the Official Plan.

Urban Parks Strategy

Approved in the 2023 Capital Budget, Park Planning staff are undertaking this comprehensive strategy to address Markham's need to develop, plan, design, build and maintain urban parks. This study will identify the unique needs of urban parks and prepare considerations for alternative park typologies such as stratified parks, parks encumbered with SWM facilities and privately owned public spaces (POPS). The strategy will provide recommendations related to technical requirements, legal implications and financial impacts all in the context of Bill 23.

Park Redevelopment Strategy & Implementation Plan

Approved in the 2023 Capital Budget, Park Planning staff are developing this strategy and its subsequent implementation plan to establish an equitable approach to evaluating, prioritizing and identifying parks that are to be redeveloped over a 5 and 10-year intake period. Markham's aging parks and amenities require capital repair/replacement, as well as many new amenities in the coming years. Population growth, changing demographics and recreational interests are changing and placing pressure on our existing parks, many of these parks are being used at levels that they weren't originally designed for or lack amenities or design standards that are reflective of today's level of service. The strategy will also review and identify potential funding models for a future Park Redevelopment Program.

Off-Leash Dog Area Policy & Implementation Plan

Approved in the 2023 Capital Budget, the Off-Leash Dog Area and Implementation Plan will consider, evaluate and identify key considerations and criteria for standard guidelines, service level hierarchy and the requirements for selecting potential sites for off-leash dog areas across the city. Upon approval of the Policy, the implementation plan will utilize the established criteria to identify potential locations in each ward and present these to the public for consultation and feedback. Final locations within each ward will be identified in the implementation plan.

2023 Pop-up Off-leash Dog Area Pilot Program

On February 6, 2023, the Budget Committee requested that staff explore options for temporary off-leash dog areas as an immediate opportunity for the summer of 2023. The implementation of a select number of temporary off-leash dog areas will provide an opportunity to test the suitability of the selected sites prior to committing them as permanent off-leash dog areas. The objective of the Pilot Program is to provide temporary off-leash dog areas, beginning in summer 2023 that will provide Markham residents with greater access to off-leash dog areas in the short-term while the City advances an Off-Leash Dog Area Policy and Implementation Plan. The temporary off-leash dog areas will provide designated and fenced areas where dogs can exercise and socialize off-leash in a safe and controlled environment.

Park Naming Policy Update

Approved as a council resolution on July 14, 2022 as a part of the 2022 Annual Park Naming Report, 'that staff undertake a review of the current Facility and Park Naming Policy and make future recommendations to revise the policy'. Staff have established a cross-commission working group to make recommendations to revise the Policy, including improvements to the efficiency and standardization of the process and to better represent and acknowledge the contributions from our diverse community through the naming of our parks.

Community Gardens Maintenance Program

This program undertakes general maintenance of city-owned community and allotment gardens to maintain a state of good repair. 100+ families in Markham cultivate garden spaces in collaboration with City staff, leading to wear and tear of tools, site infrastructure, and overall landscaping. This program applies the annual maintenance required to uphold garden standards, customer service and community engagement.

Gateway Master Plan Update

Markham's Public Realm is a long term program to create dynamic, beautiful public spaces that reflect our diverse social and cultural identity. Projects include enhancements that promote community engagement, beautification and sustainability, as well as the implementation of the Public Realm Strategy. This update is to develop the Gateway Master Plan document to strategize how the City can coordinate existing subdivision entrance features as well as a proposal for the development of new subdivision entrance features.

Park Development Capital Delivery

Park Design and Construction are responsible for the design and construction of our park system in Markham. These parks, related spaces and facilities are generally provided in response to the significant development and growth that the City is experiencing. Through the development of these important public spaces in our many communities, Park Design and Construction provides the residents of Markham with a sustainable park system that facilitates healthy, happy, diverse and equitable outdoor opportunities in our many communities.

- The current Park Development program comprises 36 projects in various stages from design to warranty, covering 125+/- acres of park development with a value of approximately \$60M to be completed between 2022 and 2026.
- In 2023, Park Design and Construction anticipates the completion and opening of 5 new parks totalling approximately 33 acres.
- Over the period from 2019 to 2022 Park Design and Construction completed 25 new parks totalling approximately 120 acres.

Park Renaissance and Public Realm Capital Delivery

Park Renaissance and Public Realm Capital projects result from extensive visioning and consultation on community aspirations in conjunction with strategic plans, the Markham Official Plan, the Integrated Leisure Master Plan and Shared Places, Our Spaces Markham's Public Realm Strategy.

- The current Park Renaissance and Public Realm program comprises 19 projects in various stages from design to construction, with a value of approximately \$1.66M to be completed between 2023 and 2025.
- In 2023, Park Renaissance is providing project management support for 5 park lifecycle replacement contracts upgrading approximately 44 sites with a value of approximately \$2M to be completed between 2023 and 2024.

Development Application Review Process Improvements

The Building Markham's Future Together Strategic Plan has an action to Streamline the Development Process. City staff have been implementing this action through several initiatives including implementing KPMG's 2019 recommendations from their assessment of the development review process and implementing ePLAN, the City's online development application submission and electronic review system. Building on these initiatives is a Lean review to identify additional efficiencies in the review process. The Lean approach is designed to identify process steps that add value, remove unnecessary steps or waste, to create more efficient and streamlined processes. A report on the results of the review will be prepared for a September 2023 DSC meeting.

Technological enhancements to ePLAN and related systems were recently completed including upgrading the development application and building permit review software for an improved applicant and reviewer experience. To increase transparency in the process a

public GIS interface for development applications called MappiT has been prepared with development application information such as unit counts, site area, gross floor area, building heights, and study attachments.

Additional technological improvements to support the development application processes are underway and include an updated web portal for submission of development and building permit applications for an improved user experience. An electronic 3D model of Markham Centre and Markham Road/Mount Joy Secondary Plan Area is being built to have data statistics to assist staff to analyze proposed developments and provide recommendations. These projects are expected to be completed by the end of Summer 2023.

The Development Fee By-law contains the fees associated to process and review development applications. The By-law is being reviewed to ensure full cost recovery and fairness as a result of the increasing complexity and amount of development applications. A new By-law is expected to be presented to the Development Services Committee this Fall and implemented by January 2024.

Comprehensive Zoning By-law

The City is undertaking a comprehensive review of its Zoning By-laws and existing zoning framework. Markham has 46 different parent zoning by-laws applied to different geographic areas of the city enacted between 1954 and 2004. The Comprehensive Zoning By-law project is intended to implement the City's 2014 Official Plan while modernizing the city's zoning framework. A statutory public meeting for the Comprehensive Zoning By-law was scheduled for May 9th, with a recommendation report to DSC on June 13th.

Response to Bill 109, Bill 23, and Bill 97

In response to the Province of Ontario's changes to the *Planning Act* under Bill 109, Bill 23, and Bill 97, Staff are proposing significant changes to various development application processes, including Site Plan, Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment applications. To implement these changes, Staff are proposing amendments to the City's Official Plan, Pre-Consultation By-law, and Municipal Services By-law. Staff are also proposing amendments within the Comprehensive Zoning By-law, as well as the Municipal Fee and Development Fee By-laws. A report to the Development Services Committee on these changes along with proposed amendments is scheduled for June 13th.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

While there are no direct financial implications from this report, the initiatives requiring funding have been approved through the City budget process.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The comments in this report on the Planning and Urban Design Department's 2023 Work Plan, support the City's efforts to enable a strong economy, manage growth and, ensure growth-related services are fully funded, which are some of the key elements of Markham's strategic priorities related to Engaged, Diverse and Thriving City; Safe and Sustainable Community; and Stewardship of Money and Resources.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Urban Design, Parks Planning, Policy and Research, and Natural Heritage were consulted in the preparation of this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Darryl Lyons, RPP, MCIP
Deputy Director of Planning and
Urban Design

Giulio Cescato, RPP, MCIP
Director of Planning and
Urban Design

Arvin Prasad, RPP, MCIP
Commissioner of
Development Services

APPENDIX A: 2023 Work Plan Table

| Projects/ Studies | Project Lead | Staff Support | Status | Comments | Anticipated Completion |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| City-wide Urban Design Guideline | Urban Design | Abbie Kar Michelle Wong | Project Underway | Update in progress | Q3 - 2024 |
| Bird Friendly Guideline Update | Urban Design | Abbie Kar Jennifer Zhao | Project Underway | Update in progress | Q4 - 2023 |
| Sun & Shadow Analysis TOR Update | Urban Design | Abbie Kar Oscar Lam | Project Underway | Municipal comparison | Q4 - 2023 |
| Sustainability Metrics Program | Urban Design | Alanna van Ommen Oscar Lam | Project Underway | Sustainability Assessment Tool - final review | Q2 - 2023 (formal launch of Sustainability Metrics as part of development application review) |
| Natural Heritage Management Study | Natural Heritage | Patrick Wong | Project Underway | Vegetation Inventory and Natural Areas Risk Assessment are complete | Q1 - 2024 |
| Natural Assets Inventory and Evaluation | Natural Heritage | Tony Iacobelli | Project Underway | Asset Registry | Q1 - 2024 |
| Ecological Restoration of City-owned Lands | Natural Heritage | Patrick Wong | Contract approval | - | Q4 - 2023 |
| Milliken Centre Secondary Plan | Policy | Liliana Da Silva | Project Underway | Draft Secondary Plan being prepared | Q4 - 2023 |
| Markham Road Mount Joy Secondary Plan | Policy | Lily-Ann D'Souza | Project Underway | Draft Secondary Plan being prepared | Q4 - 2023 |
| Markville Secondary Plan | Policy | Liliana Da Silva | Project Underway | Preparing Development options | Q2- 2024 |
| Yonge Corridor Secondary Plan | Policy | Duran Wedderburn | Project Underway | Project Launch | Q2 - 2025 |
| FUA/MIX Secondary Plan | Policy | Philip English | Planning | Issue Request for Proposal | Q3 - 2025 |
| Official Plan Review | Policy | Duran Wedderburn | Planning | Launch OPR | TBD |

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|---|---------------|--|------------------|--|-----------|
| Affordable Housing Strategy - Inclusionary Zoning | Policy | Emily Irvine | Project Underway | Preparing OPA/ZBA and awaiting new regulations from the Province | Q4- 2023 |
| Affordable Housing Strategy – Public Lands | Policy | Emily Irvine | Project Underway | DSC Report | Q4 -2023 |
| Student Housing Research | Policy | Emily Irvine | Project Underway | DSC Report | Q3- 2023 |
| Coordinating Responses to Provincial Legislation | Policy | Duran Wedderburn | Project Underway | On-going Reporting | On-going |
| Comprehensive Zoning By-law - 3B | DFO | Brad Roberts Geoff Day | Project Underway | DSC Report | Q2 - 2023 |
| Bill 109, Bill 23, and Bill 97 Implementation | DFO | Brad Roberts Geoff Day Tori Chai | Project Underway | DSC Report | Q2 - 2023 |
| Development Application Review Process (Lean Approach) | Strategy | Farnaz Bigdeli | Project Underway | DSC Report | Q3 - 2023 |
| Development Application Process Technologies | Strategy | Audrey Farias | Project Underway | DSC Report | Q3 - 2023 |
| Development Fee By-law Review | Strategy | Farnaz Bigdeli | Project Underway | DSC Report | Q3 - 2023 |
| Urban Parks Strategy | Park Planning | Matt Meere | Project Underway | Consultant hired for Phase 1 | Q2 - 2024 |
| Park Redevelopment Strategy & Implementation Plan | Park Planning | Matt Meere | Planning | Preparing to procure consultant | Q3 - 2024 |
| Off-Leash Dog Area Policy & Implementation Plan | Park Planning | Matt Meere | Planning | Preparing to procure consultant | Q2 - 2024 |