



**“TOGETHER OUR VOICE IS STRONGER”**

<http://unionvilleresidents.ca>

**Deputation to Markham Council regarding “OLT Appeal by Hilton Markham Suites Ltd.”**

Council Meeting, March 20, 2024. Agenda Item 14.2.1

C:/URA-HiltonCouncilComm2024-03-20

The Unionville Residents Association (URA) represents residents in Markham Ward 3. The Hilton proposed development is immediately adjacent to our western boundary.

The URA closely monitors development proposals in our area. Our goal is always to maintain **liveability** and achieve **complete communities** for Markham residents, both existing and future, while recognizing the need to accommodate high population growth, preserve farmland, mitigate climate change and comply with provincial policy. We support intensification along rapid transit corridors, as with the Hilton, subject to provision of **adequate physical and social infrastructure**.

We have been closely involved in the development of a new Secondary Plan for Markham Centre, most of which lies in Ward 3 and includes the Hilton. We view a current and updated Secondary Plan to be vitally important, as it defines the key aspects of a community – population, number of jobs, transportation infrastructure, parks, schools etc.

As you know, after years of study and consultation, Markham staff presented a “Recommended Development Concept” to Markham’s Development Services Committee on July 5, 2023. The Concept has the level of detail that is needed, including jobs, retail, roads, transit, schools, parkland, community centres, etc. Presumably this represents staff’s and the consultant’s expert opinion on how best to **balance** development with liveability, environment, provincial policy, sustainability etc. Therefore, although not yet finalized in a Secondary Plan, we have been using this Recommended Concept as a benchmark to define complete communities and liveability.

The Hilton file has a messy history, with numerous anomalies:

1) On May 11, 2021, at the statutory public meeting, we urged deferral of any consideration of the proposal until the Markham Centre development concept was further advanced. DSC responded by directing staff to provide an Interim report. However, on December 12, 2023, we discovered to our surprise that staff had produced a Recommendation report, despite the Council directive. The Interim Report was **inexplicably never issued**.

2) We were also shocked that staff was recommending approval of the proposal, despite the **large gap** between the Hilton proposal and the Recommended Development Concept. The specific concern is the FSI of 7.45 versus 5.0, a 50% increase, which represents many more residents, and therefore much more pressure on physical and social infrastructure.

3) The development environment surrounding the Hilton is also messy. At least two other recent developments in the immediate area **have also exceeded** the Recommended Development Concept.

4) Council deferred a decision on the Hilton pending a review by the Unionville Subcommittee on other approvals in the area and a possible adjustment to the Recommended Concept. Despite discussion of a January subcommittee meeting, this meeting has **not yet occurred**, leaving us blind to whether the Hilton proposal is good planning. Staff was also directed to report back to DSC in February, 2024 with a Recommendation Report, which **also has not occurred**.

5) We were also surprised about the OLT hearing March 15. We had assumed, because we deputed twice to Council, that we would be notified by Clerks Dept about the hearing. However, **no such notification** was received and we have an inquiry into Clerks about this. After some last minute scrambling, we were able to obtain participant status at the hearing, per our request. However, it is possible that other residents or groups were uninvited and therefore unable to participate.

The URA position is, until the Unionville Subcommittee meets and a possible revised Recommended Development Concept is unveiled and incorporated in a new Secondary Plan, this application should not be approved. We simply don't know if, based on the new higher population, whether

- Additional or wider roads are needed, perhaps on the Hilton lands
- Additional parkland is needed, perhaps on the Hilton lands
- Additional schools are needed, perhaps on the Hilton lands
- Additional community facilities are needed, perhaps on the Hilton lands

And a myriad of other unknowns.

Until the Secondary Plan is finalized, and until the proposal complies with that finalized Plan, **we simply don't know if the Hilton proposal represents good planning.**

The Planning Act S.34(12) states that "Council shall ensure that sufficient information and material is made available to enable the public to understand generally the zoning proposal that is being considered by the Council." We feel that Council's refusal to make a decision on December 12, despite the staff recommendation, for an amendment to a zoning by-law passed under this section is valid, as the public **did not have sufficient information and context** to understand generally the zoning proposal.

Instructions should be given to legal council at the OLT hearing to **oppose the proposal** until this contextual groundwork and public consultation is completed.