



SUBJECT: Markham Centre Secondary Plan Update: Draft Policy Framework (Wards 2, 3, 8)
PREPARED BY: Stephen Lue, MCIP, RPP, Senior Development Manager, Ext. 2520
REVIEWED BY: Darryl Lyons, MCIP, RPP, Deputy Director Planning and Urban Design, Ext. 2459

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the July 3, 2024, report titled, “Markham Centre Secondary Plan Update: Draft Policy Framework (Wards 2, 3, 8)”, be received;
2. THAT Staff be authorized to schedule a statutory Public Meeting on the draft Markham Centre Secondary Plan policies, attached as Appendix ‘A’ to this staff report;
3. AND THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This report presents the findings of the Markham Centre Secondary Plan (“MCSP”) Study (the “Study”) and the draft Markham Centre Secondary Plan, and seeks Council’s authorization to host the statutory Public Meeting for feedback on the draft policies.

Processes to Date

- October 2019: Official kick-off of the Study
- January 27, 2020: Formal introduction to the Development Services Committee (“DSC”)
- May 11, 2020: DSC status update and work plan options (Study boundary expansion)
- June 2020: Education material posted on “Your Voice Markham”
- June 15, 2020: Virtual presentation and engagement with York University
- July 28, 2020: Virtual visioning session 1
- August 11 and August 25, 2020: Virtual visioning sessions 2 and 3, respectively
- September 23, 2020: Virtual visioning workshop
- September 25, 2020: Youth engagement workshop
- September 28, 2020: Virtual presentation and engagement with Markham Centre Retailers
- October 9, 2020: Unionville Subcommittee – existing development
- October 26, 2020: DSC Presentation on Visioning Workshop
- November 4, 2020: Virtual presentation to York University Markham Campus Steering Committee
- December 10, 2020: Unionville Subcommittee – landowners engagement (Session 1)
- December 14, 2020: Unionville Subcommittee – landowners engagement (Session 2)
- January 12, 2021: Unionville Subcommittee – agency partners engagement
- January 14, 18, and 22, 2021: Internal engagement with Members of Council
- January 21, 2021: Unionville Subcommittee – MTO and TRCA engagement
- February 8, 2021: Preliminary Concept presentation to the DSC
- March 23, 2021: Presentation to ULI Toronto on Global Leadership and Markham Centre
- May 18 and 28 and June 4, 2021: Council workshops on the Preliminary Concept (three in total)
- June 1 and 3, 2021: Landowner engagements on the Preliminary Concept
- June 11, 2021: Stakeholder engagement on the Preliminary Concept
- June 21, 2021: Presentation to the DSC on the summary engagements for Markham Centre

- November 22, 2021: Presentation to the DSC on application along Highway 7
- March 1, 2022: Markham Centre Secondary Plan Interim Update to the DSC (“Uptown”)
- March 22, 2022: Markham Centre Secondary Plan Interim Update to the DSC (“Downtown”)
- April 5, 2022: Markham Centre Secondary Plan Interim Update to the DSC (“Fairburn” and “Kennedy”), and Smart Cities Strategy and Community Energy Plan
- July 5, 2022: Draft Development Concept presentation to the DSC
- February 2, 2023: Draft Development Concept public engagement (in-person)
- July 5, 2023: Draft Recommended Concept presentation to the DSC
- December 2023/January 2024: Finalized Recommended Concept report and draft policy
- June 3, 2024: Unionville Subcommittee – revised population projections

BACKGROUND:

Markham’s 2014 Official Plan provides direction to establish an updated secondary plan for the Markham Centre area to support the development of the City’s downtown as an Urban Growth Centre

The intent of the Study is to provide for a new Markham Centre Secondary Plan that will replace the previous policies and secondary plan under the 1987 Official Plan (Official Plan Amendment 21 - “OPA 21”). The Study builds on the policies of the Official Plan that provides direction on land use, environment, urban design, infrastructure, and community amenities that would build upon what has been established to date in the Urban Growth Centre, while providing policy updates that support a complete, connected, and walkable downtown.

The Study is the result of a multi-phased and integrated Secondary Plan Study with multiple stakeholder and public input that has informed the draft Secondary Plan

The Study was initiated in late 2019, which was undertaken by a multidisciplinary team of consultants. This journey has been well documented on the Markham Centre [Your Voice Markham](#) landing page. The work has resulted in the draft Secondary Plan along with the Markham Centre Smart City Strategy and roadmap, and Community Energy Plan. As Staff and the consultants finalize the technical analysis for servicing and transportation, the studies to date and the recommendations have informed the preparation of the draft Secondary Plan policy framework, which Staff now seek feedback that will guide implementation of the vision for the Secondary Plan area.

DISCUSSION:

The Study establishes a comprehensive framework to support the continued development of the City’s downtown as the heart of the City and a vibrant, intensive, and mixed use urban core

The draft Secondary Plan builds on the study recommendations and policy directions and puts forth a comprehensive policy framework to achieve the vision of a vibrant, intensive, and mixed-use urban core that would accommodate approximately 139,000 residents, 72,000 units, and 55,000 jobs at full build out that is anticipated to occur beyond 2130.

a) Community Structure

The draft Secondary Plan establishes a community structure for organizing and directing growth within the Secondary Plan area. The structure is further detailed through land use distribution, hierarchy of built form intensity, and the extension of the Greenway through a parks and open space system to create a whole vision for the evolution of Markham Centre. The structural components include the Greenway, Higher Order Transit, and Street Network.

-
- i) Greenway: The Rouge River traverses the downtown, separates Markham Centre's districts, and serves as a natural communal focal point that unites those districts by crossings and trail connections.
- ii) Higher Order Transit: Three planned higher order transit lines will converge on the Multimodal Station and will provide an important focal point and gateway to Markham Centre from the surrounding region: the GO line, 407 transitway, and Viva Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Rapidway.
- iii) Street Network: Streets serve as primary routes for transportation, link Markham Centre together and to the rest of the City, act as important public spaces, and establish the granularity of the block pattern with mid-block connections that enhance the permeability of the urban environment.
- b) Districts
Markham Centre's districts are distinct, each having their own combination of context, built form, uses, features, and amenities that contribute to their respective character. They perform different functions, including serving as a gateway, lively downtown, seat of municipal government, predominantly residential area, and a Central Business District. They are in some ways autonomous, and in other ways highly interdependent. An integrated transportation network enables residents, workers, students, and visitors to easily move around Markham Centre with access to amenities and experiences. Larger districts are further broken down into sub-districts to distinguish further gradations in use and character. The districts (and sub-districts) are:
- **Downtown** ("Station Area"; "Birchmount"; and "West")
 - **Uptown** ("Circa", "Warden/7"; and "7 Corridor")
 - **Fairburn**
 - **Kennedy**
- c) Environmental Systems
These systems reflect the protection and enhancement of the Natural Heritage Network associated with the Rouge River and its tributaries. The Rouge River runs west-to-east approximately 4.8 km through the core of Markham Centre. Beaver Creek discharges into the Rouge River in the southwestern portion of the Secondary Plan area, as do several other minor tributaries along its length. In total, Greenway System lands comprise over 22% of the Secondary Plan area. Trails, urban tree canopy, environmental hazards, stormwater management, and Tributaries 4 and 5 all contribute to this system.
- d) Healthy Communities
Markham Centre will be a healthy, inclusive, and complete community with a diverse population that reflects the dynamism of the City of Markham. Healthy communities are rich in the quantity, variety and quality of amenities, and experiences they offer to residents, workers, students, and visitors. Markham Centre will feature a mix of community facilities, parks and open spaces, and other amenities that contribute greatly to quality of life, including a range of housing options, affordable housing, parks and open space system, places of worship, and a civic square and major park – all integrated with the broader urban environment to create a distinct quality of place.
- e) Urban Design
Urban design shapes the interactions and movement of people in places and addresses the quality and character of the built environment with components that come together to create a place and support community function. The draft policies intend to promote design excellence focussed on built form, public realm, streets and blocks, streetscape, landmarks and views, and public art. This policy framework advances place-making opportunities that enables Markham Centre to have the competitive advantage over other suburban downtowns. As the downtown grows and develops, its built form and the public realm, will be supported by a compact, walkable, safe, inclusive, vibrant, pedestrian-focused, and multimodal community.

f) Sustainable Development

Sustainability provides the foundation to create complete communities. With transit-supportive densities, and a design approach that supports a transition to active transportation. Markham Centre intends to serve as a showcase for a future-ready complete community and should strive to achieve the Council-endorsed Municipal Energy Plan target of net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner (e.g., electric vehicle infrastructure, net zero buildings, district energy). The draft policies focus on objectives, approaches, and technologies that enhance Markham Centre's performance on sustainable development, including conservation of environmental resources, energy efficiency, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and supporting climate adaptation. In so doing, the policies of the Secondary Plan build on those of Markham 2014 Official Plan.

g) Transportation, Services and Utilities

As Markham Centre grows, it will transition from a transportation system dominated by private automobiles to one that prioritizes walking, cycling, and transit use, which is essential to create a transportation system in an intense urban environment for all users and to accommodate the anticipated development intensity. Growth must be contingent on the shift to walking, cycling, and transit (a true multimodal transportation system). Additionally, municipal infrastructure provides for the safe and effective delivery of potable water and the conveyance of wastewater and stormwater, as anticipated in the Municipal Servicing Study, which Staff are finalizing.

h) Land Use

The land use designations establish the general development pattern with policies that provide comprehensive guidance for development. Land uses will be established through the implementing zoning by-law and required development approvals. The draft policies permit publicly owned and operated community facilities, district energy, automatic vacuum collections, transportation facilities, and municipal services in all designations without amendment to the Secondary Plan.

The draft policies permit proposed densities to exceed those identified in the appendix, subject to a proponent addressing matters, to the satisfaction of the City, while considering the total projected growth of the Secondary Plan area and the cumulative impact of similar increases in density on sites with development potential. Such matters include transportation assessment, servicing study, a proportional expansion in the provision of community facilities, parks and related programming, urban design policies, and housing impact assessment (demonstrating an increase in housing variety in terms of unit size, affordability, and tenure).

As a schedule in the draft Secondary Plan, maximum heights are established at a block level, in storeys. The maximums are used in association with the shadow and public space policies. Densities in this plan are informative but not determinative of built form which has been the approach taken on all other secondary plans brought forward to Council to date.

Markham Centre offers 9.6 ha of cumulative parkland, including a Major Park, which exceeds the Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act*, changes to the *Planning Act*, which (for simplicity) would require a range of parkland area between 3.8 ha to 5.7 ha, based on 10% and 15% of the overall Markham Centre land area. The quantity and location of parkland shown in the draft Secondary Plan reflects the future needs of Markham Centre based on good planning.

i) Smart City

To support the evolution of Markham Centre as a Smart City, the Markham Centre Smart City Strategy and Roadmap recognizes that technological advances are constant, and that new technologies and

solutions will be introduced continuously. The strategy and roadmap establish a foundation for the successful, scalable, and sustainable implementation of smart solutions and a methodology for identifying, selecting, and prioritizing solutions that will realize the Secondary Plan's vision and objectives for Markham Centre.

The draft Secondary Plan is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 ("PPS") and conforms to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 ("Growth Plan")

The draft Secondary Plan supports the efficient use of land, infrastructure, and resources by accommodating growth through intensification and providing for a mix of residential, employment, institutional, parkland and other uses that optimize investments in transit infrastructure and services while promoting active transportation to meet the needs of individuals of all ages and abilities. The draft Secondary Plan also provides directions to align transit with growth and enhance opportunities for transit use and active transportation within the identified Urban Growth Centre (Markham Centre).

The draft Secondary Plan conforms to the York Region Official Plan, 2022 ("YROP") as it accommodates planned growth through intensification in an Urban Growth Centre

The YROP establishes Protected Major Transit Station Areas ("PMTSA") within the Secondary Plan area. PMTSAs are generally defined as the area within an approximately 500 to 800 metre radii of a transit station, representing a 10-minute walk. Section 10.8.1 of the draft Secondary Plan identifies seven PMTSAs in Markham Centre, each with a minimum density target. The draft Secondary Plan conforms to the YROP in terms of identifying existing and/or planned transportation, municipal servicing, and community amenities required to support growth and meet the needs of residents of all ages and abilities.

The policies of the 2014 Official Plan state that until an approval of an updated secondary plan for Markham Centre, the 1987 Town of Markham Official Plan, as amended by OPA 21, shall apply

OPA 21 enables a high concentration and intensity of residential, commercial, employment and supporting uses within the existing borders of Markham Centre. In May 2020, areas around Markham Centre were added to the downtown under the operative policies in the 2014 Official Plan. The draft Secondary Plan proposes to update the policies of OPA 21 while incorporating the expansion areas into Markham Centre.

A new zoning by-law will be prepared to implement the Secondary Plan

In the interim, landowners in the Secondary Plan area have brought forward site-specific development applications to amend the in-effect zoning by-laws to conform to the Secondary Plan.

NEXT STEPS:

Next steps include releasing the final study reports, getting feedback on the draft Secondary Plan in Q3-2024, and holding the statutory Public Meeting and adoption in Q4-2024.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The draft Secondary Plan policy framework fulfills the requirement of the direction in the City's 2014 Official Plan and supports Goal 3 (Safe, Sustainable, and Complete Community) in Building Markham's Future Together.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

The applicable departments have been consulted in the development of this report, including Planning and Urban Design, Policy Planning, Information Technology Services, Legal Services, and Sustainability and Asset Management.

RECOMMENDED BY:

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

Arvin Prasad, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner of Development Services

APPENDIX:

Appendix 'A': Draft Markham Centre Secondary Plan