



SUBJECT: Planning and Urban Design Department 2025 Work Plan

PREPARED BY: Steven Bell, Senior Manager, Urban Design, ext. 3137
Richard Fournier, Senior Manager, Parks Planning, Design & Construction, ext. 2120
Stephen Lue, Senior Manager, Development, ext. 2520
John Yeh, Acting Senior Manager, Policy Planning, ext. 7922
Mark Head, Manager, Natural Heritage, ext. 2005
Regan Hutcherson, Manager, Heritage Planning, ext. 2080
Duran Wedderburn, Manager, Policy Planning, ext. 2109

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT the February 11, 2025, report titled, “Planning and Urban Design Department 2025 Work Plan”, be received;
2. AND THAT staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The 2025 Planning and Urban Design Department work plan demonstrates the significant resources that Staff have applied on top of their respective and demanding daily work programs to support the City’s healthy and complete community vision. The projects that Staff will lead in 2025 represent inter-disciplinary initiatives with anticipated completion from 2025 to 2027. This report highlights key projects that are underway in Urban Design; Policy Planning; Parks Planning, Design and Construction; and Development Planning.

PURPOSE:

This report provides Council with the second annual overview presentation of the Planning and Urban Design Department work plan for 2025 (the “Work Plan”), which illustrates the various inter-disciplinary projects, initiatives, and resources being advanced to support Markham’s vision for a healthy and complete community.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSIONS:

The following summarizes each initiative undertaken by various divisions in the Planning and Urban Design Department. These initiatives include the following obligations:

- a) to meet recent provincial legislative changes and statutory requirements
- b) to implement Council Resolutions and requests to Staff
- c) to implement Building Markham's Future Together Strategic Plan

Appendix “A” provides detailed information on the status and anticipated completion time of the current initiatives. Since 2023 and 2024, many projects have advanced. For 2025, Staff will direct resources to implementing, monitoring, and refining the projects as necessary, as new projects are initiated and process improvements continue.

A. Urban Design Team

Urban Design has been leading many current projects that would advance City initiatives, which include the following:

1. City-wide Urban Design Guidelines (“UDG”)

Approved in the 2024 Capital Budget, the City’s UDG, which was introduced at the June 4, 2024, Development Services Committee, will ensure consistent design direction and guidance to help shape Markham into an urban, sustainable, healthy, and complete City. The UDG will be read in conjunction with the policies of the Official Plan and the requirements of various regulatory documents to respond to recent provincial legislative changes, visually articulate the design objectives of the Official Plan, and provide guidance to landowners, the development industry, and City staff to be implemented through development application review. Staff anticipate reporting back to DSC on the completed Guidelines by Q1-2026.

2. Bird-Friendly Guidelines Update

Council endorsed the current Bird-Friendly Guidelines in 2014 to ensure new buildings implement mitigation measures to minimize bird strikes. The update to the Guidelines and Specifications Checklist underway will reflect the latest Canadian Standards Association standards and new and best management practices for bird-friendly building and site design. The outcome would improve City standards for development applications to manage bird-window collisions. The update is expected to be completed in Q2-2025.

3. Sun and Shadow Analysis Terms of Reference Update

The technical update to the existing Terms of Reference will improve the evaluation criteria of shadow impacts created by proposed developments on nearby properties and the public realm. It would also set requirements for assessing both incremental and cumulative shadow impacts cast by a proposed development on its surrounding context. The Update is well underway and is expected to be completed by Q1-2025.

4. Age-Friendly Design Guideline Implementation

In 2022, City Council endorsed Markham’s Age-Friendly Design Guidelines as ‘standards’ for the City. The guideline directs new development to accommodate people of all ages, including families with young children and those aging-in-place. As part of the Council resolution, Staff are in the process of retaining a consultant to complete a cost analysis to implement guidelines in the public realm and will report back to Development Services Committee in Q4-2025. Staff are now refining an implementation strategy to prioritize age-friendly design in the City and streamline review processes for development applications.

5. Trees for Tomorrow: Streetscape Manual Update

Council approved Markham’s Trees for Tomorrow: Streetscape Manual in 2009 to demonstrate the City’s commitment to preserving trees and enhancing canopy cover. The manual is implemented city-wide and applies to private trees associated with development applications, in addition to street tree planting. Through a set of standard specifications and details, the manual ensures adequate tree replacements, promotes best practices, and a consistent streetscape design throughout the City. To implement policies of the 2014 Official Plan, this project will update procedures for tree preservation and planting, specifically with the purpose to: a) Align with requirements in Markham’s new Tree

Preservation By-law 2023-164; b) Update tree planting details and add new references; and c) Promote best practices for street design and maintenance procedures.

6. Streetscape Guidelines for Intensification Areas

To implement the 2014 Official Plan vision for attractive, sustainable, and well-designed streetscapes, Staff are developing Street Guidelines for Intensification Areas that will focus on ensuring comprehensive and cohesive streetscape boulevard treatments in built-up intensification areas with the following objectives:

- a) Consistent streetscape design approach within the City's Intensification Areas
- b) City-wide street sections and street furniture approach
- c) Updated specification details and references
- d) Costing analysis for pedestrian realm infrastructure to establish capital, operations and maintenance, and life-cycle cost parameters

Staff will retain a consultant in Q3-2025 to complete the cost analysis to identify capital, operations and maintenance, and life-cycle costs for streetscape enhancements. This work will inform Council of the costs associated with building and maintaining high quality urban streetscapes in the city, while also assisting staff with budgeting for long-term planning of capital projects and inform operational and maintenance needs.

7. Markham Centre Civic Square Vision

Staff have begun work on the Markham Centre Civic Square vision by looking at a wide range of local, regional, national, and international precedents, including best practices and lessons learned from other notable civic squares. The next phase of the vision will be consultant-led, entailing a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, defining key principles, a high-level needs assessment with spatial requirements and order of magnitude costing with recommendations on next steps. This phase will also identify surrounding uses to catalyze the civic square working in tandem with the Markham Centre Secondary Plan update and is expected to be launched in Q2-2025 with a targeted completion in late 2025.

8. Markham Centre Secondary Plan ("MCSP") Update

Launched in 2019, the boundary of the MCSP update expanded in 2020 with a one-third addition to the overall study area. Staff delivered the vision and guiding principles (2021), the preliminary concept (2022), the recommended concept (2023) where Staff presented modifications that reflect active approvals in the downtown, and the draft Secondary Plan policies (2024), followed by a series of staff-led stakeholder engagements. In late 2024 and for 2025, Staff have and will review the policies and schedules and will bring forward the final Secondary Plan in Q3-2025, along with the statutory Public Meeting, with a final approval by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by Q4-2025.

9. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act ("AODA") Document Remediation Initiative

In 2024, staff initiated document remediation to ensure all Planning and Urban Design Department documents on the City's website comply with the required AODA standards and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. In addition to complying with the AODA (2005), this initiative demonstrates the City's continued commitment to being a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive organization to all persons, regardless of ability. The primary objectives include evaluating existing inventory of website documents, developing a remediation strategy and developing AODA compliant templates as part of a future phase.

10. New Tree Permit Process

The new Tree Permit process will respond to several evolving Provincial legislative changes and the City's new site plan application process. In addition to implementing the 2014 Official Plan policies to implement tree preservation and compensation, the Tree Permit will grant permission to landowners to remove trees associated with development applications while allowing the City to collect tree removal compensation and securities. In collaboration with other City Departments, in 2025, Staff will finalize the new process that addresses the provisions in Tree Preservation By-Law 2023-164.

B. Policy Planning Team

The Policy Planning team has been leading many current projects that would advance City initiatives, which include the following:

1. Official Plan and Secondary Plans

Staff manage the 2014 Official Plan ("OP") in accordance with the statutory requirements of the *Planning Act*, respond to provincial land use related legislation (i.e., Bill 162, Bill 185, Bill 134, and Regional Planning Transition), 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 in the City. Staff also undertake Secondary Plans required by the OP, including six current secondary plans studies and one more in the pre-planning/procurement stage.

Staff launched an Official Plan Review ("OPR") on January 23, 2025, by hosting a Special Meeting of Council to provide an overview of the approach and timing for the OPR and receive input from the public and stakeholders on what aspects of the OP should be reviewed and updated. The scope of work is currently being updated and Staff are targeting Q2-2025 to retain a consultant to undertake the OPR.

2. Affordable and Rental Housing

Staff are working on the implementation of Markham's Affordable and Rental Housing Strategy ("AHS"), specifically 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. The City was successful in its Housing Accelerator Fund ("HAF") application to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation ("CMHC") and has been approved for approximately \$58 million to facilitate 1,640 new units over three years based on the following seven initiatives to support housing:

- a) Public Partnerships
- b) Additional Residential Units ("ARU") and Incentives Program
- c) Major Transit Station Areas ("MTSA")
- d) Inclusionary Zoning ("IZ") in MTSAs
- e) Incentives Program for Affordable Housing
- f) Enhance Markham's Electronic Development Application System
- g) Parking and Transportation Demand Management Standard Update for Intensification Areas

The City's AHS initiatives are captured in the HAF application and will be further implemented. Staff are also preparing a report to DSC on securing Affordable Housing that will be presented in Q2-2025.

3. Sustainability Metrics (the “Metrics”) Program

Council endorsed the Sustainability Metrics as Markham's green development standard in May 2022, with the intent to improve the sustainability of new construction with its integration in the development application review process. The Metrics are complementary to third-party green building certification systems such as LEED, Energy Star for New Homes, and Passive House. It implements Council's direction in the Municipal Energy Plan to improve building energy performance and in section 6.2 of the City's OP relating to sustainable development.

Staff are implementing the Sustainability Metrics Program encouraging applicants to participate through site plan and plan of subdivision applications to achieve minimum sustainability scores. Markham joins municipal partners (Brampton, Vaughan, and Richmond Hill) in implementing this program.

4. Natural Heritage Management Study

The 2014 Official Plan identifies approximately 7,000 ha of lands in the City's Greenway System and establishes policies to maintain and enhance this interconnected network of natural areas. More than half of the Greenway System is owned and managed by public agencies and approximately 1,000 ha is City-owned, including natural areas that are primarily acquired through the development approval process.

Council endorsed the Natural Heritage Management Study in May 2024 to serve as a guiding framework for the stewardship and improvement of City-owned natural areas and inform updates to the City's Asset Management Plan and Official Plan. The project is now in the implementation phase. Priority actions recommended for implementation in 2025 include advancing the review of the Greenway System policies and mapping as part of the City's Official Plan Review, implementing understory planting of trees and shrubs in woodlands, targeted control of invasive species, and developing an inventory of restoration projects to support future ecological restoration and wetland creation projects.

5. Natural Assets Inventory and Evaluation (the “Natural Assets Study”)

The Natural Assets Study was completed and endorsed for implementation by Council in May 2024. Building on the Natural Heritage Management Study, the Natural Assets Study provides information needed to integrate City-owned natural features (woodlands, wetlands, and meadow habitat) into the City's Corporate Asset Management Plan and Framework. Included in the 2024 Corporate Asset Management Plan are the registry describing the City-owned natural assets, condition assessment of natural assets, and information on current levels of City-provided services to maintain the assets over their life cycle. Potential enhancements to levels of service are proposed to be reviewed and refined in the future as part of the City's 2025 Asset Management Plan and Financial Strategy.

6. Reforestation Projects on City-owned Natural Areas

The ecological restoration program implements ecological restoration projects annually within City-owned natural areas. Projects include reforestation, invasive species control, and stream/riparian habitat rehabilitation. This program utilizes cash-in-lieu payments paid by development proponents where trees and natural heritage features are approved to be removed in accordance with the Official Plan and Council direction. The purpose is to replant trees and restore natural features to 'offset' removals because of development approvals. This program supports Council's 30% tree canopy target and the natural

heritage objectives of the Official Plan. The planned deliverables for 2025 include planting 10,900 trees and shrubs equivalent to approximately 4 ha of new woodland restoration with 0.8 ha of invasive plant species removal to prepare sites for replanting.

7. Wetland Creation (Milne Dam Conservation Park)

In 2025, utilizing funding from the City's Woodlot/Wetland Compensation Account, this project will result in the design and construction of approximately 1 ha of new wetland habitat with some associated upland reforestation at Milne Dam Conservation Park. This project follows the 2024 design and construction of the Robinson Creek wetland in Berczy Village and will provide wildlife habitat, local erosion control, and water quality benefits.

8. Biodiversity Strategy

Approved in the 2024 Capital Budget, Natural Heritage staff will be developing a Biodiversity Strategy building on recently completed studies on the City's natural heritage system, features, and areas. The Strategy will provide a plan with goals, targets, and actions to recognize the importance of biodiversity protection. It will identify programming gaps, including addressing new responsibilities for natural heritage review, and recommend initiatives and actions to be undertaken in parks and on other public and private lands across the City. A key deliverable of the Strategy will be communication and engagement with City departments, partner agencies, development community, interest groups, and the public. Work on the Strategy in 2025 will be phased with other workplan priorities and focus on developing detailed terms of reference to retain a consultant team to launch the study.

9. Rouge River Watershed Plan ("RRWP") Update

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority will be initiating an update to the RRWP in 2025 to replace the current plan developed in 2007. The RRWP will be providing a comprehensive understanding of the health of the watershed in the context of both land use change and climate change. Future growth scenarios with and without climate projections will be evaluated to understand how these variables affect watershed health and how management actions can help improve the health and resilience of the watershed. Policy and Research staff will be coordinating technical inputs to the RRWP through a Steering Committee and reporting to Council as needed.

C. Parks Planning, Design, and Construction Team

The Parks Planning, Design, and Construction team has been leading many current projects that would advance City initiatives, which include the following:

1. Urban Parks Strategy

Approved in the 2023 Capital Budget, 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, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*. A consultant was awarded in March 2023, and a Draft Background Study and Draft Framework Document are under review with stakeholders. Staff have placed the next phases on hold until Provincial regulations are released in response to Bill 23 that will determine a developer's ability to self-identify where park is to be located and what restrictions and credit rates may apply to encumbered

parkland such as strata and 'privately owned public spaces' (POPS). The current hold will enable our strategy to appropriately respond to the legislative environment and avoid re-work once the regulations are released.

2. Park Redevelopment Strategy and Implementation Plan

Approved in the 2023 Capital Budget, Staff are developing this strategy and implementation plan to establish an equitable approach to evaluating, prioritizing, and identifying parks for redevelopment over a five and ten-year intake period. Markham's aging parks and amenities require capital repair/replacement and many new amenities in the coming years. Population growth, changing demographics, and recreational interests are changing and placing pressure on our existing parks where many are being used at levels that they were not 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.

3. Off-Leash Dog Area Policy and Implementation Plan

Approved in the 2023 Capital Budget, the Off-Leash Dog Area Policy and Implementation Plan will evaluate, and identify key considerations and criteria for standard guidelines, provision standards, service level hierarchy and the requirements for selecting potential sites for Off-leash Dog Areas across the City. The policy is also informed by the findings of the ongoing Pop-up Off-leash Dog Area Program that was installed in the Fall of 2023 and continues to be operated today. Upon Council's approval of the policy, which is anticipated in 2025, the subsequent Implementation Plan will be initiated and will utilize the established policy criteria to identify and make recommendations to Council for permanent Off-leash Dog Area locations and the related capital and operating budget requests associated with the programming.

4. 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. By September 2023, eight temporary off-leash areas were installed (one per ward) for use by the community. Each Temporary off-leash site includes a fenced area where dogs can exercise and socialize off-leash in a safe and controlled environment. The implementation of these eight temporary off-leash dog areas provides an opportunity to test the suitability of the selected opportunity sites prior to committing to them as permanent off-leash dog areas. The objective of the Pilot Program was to provide temporary off-leash dog areas, beginning in summer 2023 that would provide Markham residents with greater access to off-leash dog areas in the short-term while providing data that would support development of the Off-Leash Dog Area Policy and Implementation Plan that is currently underway.

5. Park Naming Policy Update

Approved by 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 recommend policy revisions, 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. In 2024, an update of the Street Naming Policy Update was requested to collaborate with the scope of work of the Park Naming Policy Update to identify and take advantage of potential

efficiencies, such as the potential for a shared evaluation committee. The policy update is anticipated to be brought to Council for approval by Q4 2025.

6. 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 to uphold garden standards, customer service, and community engagement.

7. 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, sustainability, and the implementation of the Public Realm Strategy. This update will develop the Gateway Master Plan document to strategize how the City should coordinate existing subdivision entrance features and will include a proposed standard for new subdivision entrance features with consideration of lifecycle and funding implications.

8. Park Development Capital Delivery Program

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

- a) The current Park Development program comprises 38 projects in various stages from design to warranty, covering 115+/- ac of park development with a value of approximately \$59M to be completed between 2025 and 2027.
- b) In 2025, Park Design and Construction anticipates the completion of 8 new park projects totaling approximately 13 ac.
- c) Over the period from 2019 to 2024 Park Design and Construction completed 34 new parks totalling approximately 159 ac.

9. Park Asset Lifecycle Replacement Program

In mid-2023, the Development Services Commission took responsibility for many of the park asset lifecycle replacement programs and the related lifecycle financial updates and includes AODA refurbishment program, playground replacements, backstop and outfield fence replacements, court resurfacing/replacements, and shade structure resurfacing/replacements. Existing park assets are identified for end-of-life replacement or refurbishment in accordance with annual condition assessments prepared and provided by the Parks Operations team. This Program ensures continuity of our park services and infrastructure and enable community resiliency and community safety with the following attributes:

- a) The current Park Asset Lifecycle Replacement program comprises multiple contracts in various stages from design to warranty, enhancing assets in 127 existing parks with an approved value of approximately \$11.6M to be completed between 2025 and 2026.

10. Park Renaissance and Public Realm Capital Delivery Program

The projects in this Program result from visioning and consultation on community aspirations in conjunction with strategic plans, the 2014 Official Plan, the Integrated Leisure Master Plan and Shared Places, and Our Spaces Markham's Public Realm Strategy. The current program comprises of 26 projects in various stages from design to construction, with a value of approximately \$1.7M to be completed between 2025 and 2026.

11. Park Development Guidelines

This project will develop a consolidated set of standards, guidelines and specifications related to the design and construction of parks. The guidelines will include base park requirements for grading and servicing, define facility sizes and specify standard construction details and specifications for various park elements based on best practices, total cost of ownership and consultation with city stakeholders. Standardizing and consolidating this information will help ensure a consistent standard is applied to parks and will facilitate improved coordination with external consultants and applicants.

12. Parkland Dedication Bylaw Update

Approved in the 2025 Capital Budget, the Parkland Dedication By-law 2022-102 is due for an update in response to the legislative changes resulting from Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022. The update will also incorporate appropriate exemptions and delegated authority.

D. Development Planning Team

In addition to the 280 active development applications under review, the Development Planning team, with assistance from the Strategy and Innovation team, has been leading the following current projects that would advance City initiatives:

1. Development Application Review Process Improvements

The Building Markham's Future Together Strategic Plan has an action to streamline the Development Process that Staff have been implementing through several initiatives, including the following:

- Implement recommendations from the Lean review that identified continued and improved efficiencies in the process
- Continued data and file tracking improvements
- Responding to changes in Provincial legislation and identifying internal opportunities to further streamline processes

The following projects will cumulatively contribute to the ongoing service improvements in the Development Planning section:

a) ePLAN Improvements

In 2023 and 2024, upgrades to ePLAN and related systems were completed including the development application and building permit review software for an improved applicant and reviewer experience. For 2025, Staff will continue the customization of the ePLAN development application review workflow software by development application types to achieve additional efficiencies and predictability in the timing and milestones of the reviewing and commenting process with Staff and applicants. The first customized workflow prepared is the Heritage Permit Workflow in 2024 because of changes to the permitting process from Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act*. This new workflow will be

launched officially in Q1 2025 to allow applicants to submit through the City's online application portal.

b) MappiT Improvements

To increase transparency, MappiT was launched where the public can obtain information on development applications (e.g., unit counts, site area, gross floor area, building heights, and study attachments). For 2025, Staff will continue to monitor the platform and implement improvements where required.

c) Electronic 3D Model

In 2023, an electronic 3D model of Markham Centre and Markham Road/Mount Joy Secondary Plan Areas was completed with the intent to assist Staff in analyzing proposed developments prior to recommendations to Council. For 2025, Staff will continue to work on the implementation and integration of the 3D model data statistics as part of a complete application submission that would include guidance for applicants to prepare a 3D model.

d) Plan of Subdivision Process Improvements

Additional process improvement initiatives occurring in 2025 involve reviewing the Plan of Subdivision and phasing processes for further efficiencies that include integrating other processes, such as the Town House Siting process into Plan of Subdivision.

e) New Development Fee By-law Implementation

Supporting the development application process is the Development Fee by-law, which contains fees associated to process and review development applications. The new By-law was approved by Council in December 2023, with incremental updates in 2024 for improved interpretation, and is being implemented and monitored in 2025 to ensure full cost recovery.

f) Response to Provincial Legislation Changes

As processes change and are modified for efficiency or through Provincial legislation, Staff, in 2025, will update internal standard operating procedures to assist in the efficient and predictable review of planning applications for service excellence. For 2025, Staff will also monitor any further changes in legislation and the processes implemented through recent amendments.

g) File Closure Protocols

As Staff continue modernizing the planning processes based on performance metrics, protocols on closing long standing and inactive development applications would provide accurate information on file workloads. This would assist with data clean up. The release of formalized protocols for file closures in late 2024 required system modifications. For 2025, communication with our development partners, staff training and implementation, and monitoring will be part of the implementation of this protocol.

h) Standard Operation Procedure

As processes improve, Staff have been and will continue to develop a standard operation procedure manual that will give staff direction and certainty in the updated processes. Each procedure will cater to an application type and will integrate not only the processing of applications, but also the technological steps in the ePLAN platform.

This will provide predictability in the review of applications and will be delivered in modules in 2025 and 2026.

i) Updated Process for Zoning Order Framework (Ministers Zoning Order - "MZO")

The City received an application in December 2023, through the Community Infrastructure Housing Accelerator ("CIHA") process. In April 2024, the Province introduced Bill 185 and a new zoning order framework and on June 6, 2024, it received royal assent. This framework replaced the previously established CIHA process. The new framework pertains to MZO requests. Staff, in 2025, will establish a new process that will provide a consistent and predictable approach to MZO requests.

j) Standard Drawing Templates

In the City's ongoing effort to improve processing of applications, Staff have embarked on the exercise to develop a series of standard drawing templates that will ensure the predictability of information on drawings (e.g., site plan, elevations, landscape, sections, draft plans, engineering plans). Many consultants have their own drawing templates where information is placed in various areas that are not intuitive when reviewed by Staff. This exercise will standardize all information for a more efficient review by Staff.

These efforts to review existing processes, introduce new measures and improve customer service have led to significant improvements in the City's development process. Recently, the City was recognized for rising to 5th spot in the 2024 BILD Municipal Benchmarking Study.

2. Comprehensive Zoning By-law ("CZBL")

Since the enactment of the City's 2014 Official Plan, Staff have been working on the CZBL. In Q1-2024, Council approved the CZBL following the work from 2023 to modernize and collapse the 46 different parent zoning by-laws applied to different geographic areas of the City from 1954 to 2004. Following the receipt of seven appeals, the Ontario Land Tribunal approved the CZBL on a City-wide basis. Staff, in 2025, will work on refining and providing clarity on certain provisions including, but not limited to, additional residential units and zoning interpretations.

3. Implications from Bill 109, Bill 23, Bill 97, and Bill 185

In response to the Province of Ontario's changes to the *Planning Act* under Bill 109, Bill 23, and Bill 97, Staff have been processing Official Plan, Zoning By-law, and Site Plan applications in an expedited manner. With the introduction of Bill 185, Staff have been tasked to respond to recent legislative changes and impacts on the established processes from previous Bills. This has led to a few refusal reports that have subsequently led to appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal that requires significant staff resourcing to address the appeals and participate in Tribunal-led mediation. Moreover, with Bill 185 and rescinding fee returns, Staff in 2025 will review the recently established processes to provide flexibility in review times while maintaining the intent to expedite applications.

4. Ontario Land Tribunal – Improvements to Internal Processes

In response to the above item, Staff had recommended refusals of a few applications that are now referred to the Ontario Land Tribunal. To ensure defined roles and responsibilities, Staff have been working with the City's Legal Services Department on improving the internal process when an application is appealed. This would ensure predictability for Staff

and Members of Council and includes the tribunal and mediation process. Training will be offered in 2024/2025 to support Staff as they work with the City's Legal team.

5. Markham Village Heritage Conservation District ("MVHCD") – New District Plan
This project, anticipated to be completed in Q1-2026, will update the existing 1990 MVHCD Plan to reflect the format used in Markham for other more recently approved District Plans, update policies and guidelines to reflect current best practice within heritage conservation, and revise building/property classifications. The City recognizes that the current document is out of date, not reflective of current City policies and provincial legislation, and lacks the guidance and direction for Staff, the Heritage Markham Committee, Council, impacted property owners, and the public.
6. Heritage Register – Priority Designation Program and New Inventory Project
Complete the Priority Designation Program in 2024 and 2025 and recommend the designation of all high and medium priority properties to Council bringing 7 to 8 properties forward per month. Investigate introducing a new Markham 'Heritage Property Inventory' to capture any listed properties that are not designated by December 2026, which must be removed from the official Register, including those owned by the municipality, province, and federal government (Rouge Park).
7. Telecommunication Protocol Implementation
As we continue to modernize and streamline all processes, Staff have updated the City's January 2012, "Policy for Establishing Telecommunication Facilities". The updated process continues to align with Federal regulations and sets out expectations from the municipality and reviewers of telecommunication facilities proposals. Historically, Site Plan Control applications, under the permissions of the *Planning Act*, have been used to receive these proposal types. This update was implemented in Q4-2024 to correctly organize the process that involves a new and simplified workflow with the correct jurisdictional review, which will be monitored in 2025.
8. Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee ("MAAC") Update
Staff have reinitiated the MAAC and updated the Terms of Reference that would enable early engagement of development application review for proposals that are inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities. Applicants are encouraged to work with the City on Site Plan Applications (institutional, commercial, or industrial projects with significant public realm access and on City projects) to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. For 2025, Planning Staff will have more engagement with the Committee where input will be sought and integrated into proposals prior to Site Plan Application submission.
9. Visioning Exercise Workplan for the Bayview Avenue and John Street Area
In July 2023, Staff prepared a draft visioning exercise for this area, which was presented to the Development Services Committee. The exercise identified potential new roads, multi-use connections such as the active transportation network, local trail network, new public parks, and an assessment for the need for additional community services and commercial amenities to support existing and future area residents. Staff prepared the visioning exercise as a baseline for public and stakeholder consultation for a final Precinct Plan. For 2024 and 2025, Planning Staff have retained Third Party Public Inc. to facilitate the public and stakeholder engagement consultation scoped to three themed sessions (height and density, transportation and mobility, community uses). The result of the visioning exercise

will culminate in an update to the Development Services Committee in Q1-2025 with an anticipated approval of the Precinct Plan in Q2-2025.

10. City's Street Naming Process Update

In conjunction with the Parks Naming Policy Update, Staff are evaluating opportunities to update and modernize the City's Street Naming process to improve efficiency and transparency, and better represent and acknowledge the contributions from our diverse community through the naming of our streets. Staff target Q1-2025 to complete the update.

11. Special Events

Staff will co-administer the planning and execution of Doors Open Markham ("DOM") 2025 planned for September 2025 with Corporate Communications and the DOM Committee. Staff will also work with Heritage Markham Committee on the planning of event(s) related to the committee's 50th anniversary. Staff will also prepare a display for Heritage Week at the Civic Centre and administer the Heritage Awards of Excellence.

12. Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan Update – Yonge Street Heights

Staff will undertake the *Ontario Heritage Act* amendment process to update the existing height guidelines in the District Plan.

13. Heritage Financial Assistance Program

In 2025, Staff will administer and process applications for the three heritage assistance programs (grants and tax rebates) and facilitate the review of the Designated Heritage Property Grant Program to extend this Program (currently funded for 2023-2025).

CONCLUSION

For 2025, this report sufficiently demonstrates that Planning and Urban Design Staff continue to industriously meet their demanding workload to deliver excellent public service considering the numerous projects identified in this report, as summarized:

- Urban Design: on track to deliver 10 major projects (eight citywide and two within Markham Centre) by 2025 to 2026 on top of Staff's review of development applications
- Policy Planning: on track to deliver 20 major policy projects and sub-projects, including the citywide official plan review and numerous secondary plans, by 2026
- Parks Planning, Design and Construction: on track to deliver 84 projects and programs on top of Staff's review of development applications and contributions to citywide initiatives, by 2025 to 2027, including 38 park development projects covering approximately 115 ac valued at \$59M and the completion of 8 new park projects totaling approximately 13 ac – these are on top of the 34 new parks delivered between 2019 and 2024 (totaling 159 ac)
- Development Planning: on track to deliver 10 process improvements and 12 projects in 2024 and 2025 on top of the current workload of 280 active applications in the system, with some appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal

The projects identified in this report represent the culmination of effective team collaboration and creative solutions on projects that Staff have managed to prepare, deliver, and monitor as part of their daily and, in most instances, above their expected work programs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

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 2025 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, Heritage, Natural Heritage, and Strategy and Innovation were consulted in the preparation of this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

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

Arvin Prasad, RPP, MCIP
Commissioner of Development Services

APPENDIX:

Appendix “A”: 2025 Work Plan Table

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Project		Staff Support	Status	Comments	Anticipated Completion	
Name/Study	Lead					
A1	City-wide Urban Design Guideline	Urban Design	S. Bell / A. Kar	Project Underway	Project launch Q2 – 2024; Developing draft document and consultation	Q1-2026
A2	Bird Friendly Guideline Update	Urban Design	J. Zhao, A. Covelli	Project Underway	Developing draft document	Q2-2025
A3	Sun and Shadow Analysis TOR Update	Urban Design	O. Lam	Project Underway	Developing draft document	Q1-2025
A4	Age Friendly Implementation	Urban Design	A. Kar	Project Underway	Preparing RFP/TOR to hire external consultant	Q4-2025
A5	Trees for Tomorrow: Streetscape Manual	Urban Design	S. Brouwer, A. Van Ommen	Project Underway	Developing draft document	Q3-2025
A6	Streetscape Guidelines for Intensification Areas	Urban Design	C. Chu, M. Sruga	Project Underway	Preparing RFP/TOR to hire external consultant	Q4-2025
A7	Markham Centre Civic Square Vision	Urban Design	S. Bell	Planning	Project launch anticipated for Q2 - 2025	Q4-2025
A8	Markham Centre Secondary Plan Update	Development Planning, Urban Design	S. Lue, M. Sruga	Project Underway	Policy drafting, statutory Public Meeting, Council Adoption, and final MMAH approval	Q3-2025
A9	<i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</i> Document Remediation Initiative	Urban Design	A. Kar	Planning	Project in progress	Ph 1: Q1-2025 Ph 2: Q3-2025 Ph 3: future
A10	New Tree Permit	Urban Design	A. Kar, S. Brouwer	Project Underway	Developing draft process	Q1 - 2025
B1	Official Plan and Secondary Plans	Policy				
	Official Plan Review	Policy	D. Wedderburn Jessie Huang	Planning	Special Meeting of Council in Q1 2025	TBD
	Employment and Commercial Lands Study	Policy	L. D’Souza	Planning	Procuring consultant	TBD
	Markham Road Mount Joy Secondary Plan	Policy	L. D’Souza	Approved by Region	Appealed to OLT	TBD

Project		Staff Support	Status	Comments	Anticipated Completion	
Name/Study	Lead					
B2	Markville Secondary Plan	Policy	L. D'Souza, P. English	Project Underway	Update report to DSC Q4 2024	Q2-2025
	Yonge Corridor Secondary Plan	Policy	D. Schlosser J. Minor	Project Underway	Interim Report and Emerging Concept Q1 2025	Q2-2025
	Milliken Centre Secondary Plan	Policy	D. Wedderburn	Council Adopted	Adopted Secondary Plan sent to Province for Approval	Q2- 2025
	Cornell Centre Secondary Plan	Policy	P. English	Project Underway	Draft Secondary Plan to Council Q4- 2024	Q3- 2025
	FUA/MiX Secondary Plan	Policy	P. English	Planning	Issue Request for Proposal	TBD
	Coordinating Responses to Provincial Legislation	Policy	D. Wedderburn	Project Underway	On-going Reporting	Ongoing
	Affordable and Rental Housing	Policy	D. Wedderburn N. Lawrence	Implementation	Underway	Q2-2025 report to DSC
	Housing Accelerator Fund – Housing Needs Assessment	Policy	H. Song	Planning	Procuring Consultant	Q3-2025
	Housing Accelerator Fund – Inclusionary Zoning	Policy	H. Song	Planning	Procuring Consultant	Q3-2025
	Housing Accelerator Fund – Additional Residential Units	Policy	L. D'Souza	Project Underway	Preparing Draft Official Plan Amendment	Q2- 2025
Housing Accelerator Fund – MTSA (up to 4 storeys)	Policy	D. Schlosser	Project Underway	Preparing Draft Official Plan Amendment	Q2- 2025	
B3	Sustainability Metrics Program	Natural Heritage	M. Head	Project Underway	On-going	Ongoing
B4	Natural Heritage Management Study	Natural Heritage	P. Wong	Project Underway	Initial Implementation Phase	Q4-2025

Project		Staff Support	Status	Comments	Anticipated Completion	
Name/Study	Lead					
B5	Natural Assets Inventory and Evaluation	Natural Heritage	P. Wong, M. Head	Project Underway	Initial Implementation Phase	Q4-2025
B6	Reforestation Projects on City-owned Natural Areas	Natural Heritage	P. Wong	Project Underway	Various Sites Across the City	Q4-2025
B7	Wetland Creation (Milne Dam Conservation Park)	Natural Heritage	P. Wong	Project Underway	Milne Dam Park Wetland	Q4-2025
B8	Biodiversity Strategy	Natural Heritage	P. Wong, M. Head	Planning	Preparing to Procure Consultant	Q1-2026
B9	Rouge River Watershed Plan Update (led by TRCA with local municipal participation)	Natural Heritage	M. Head	Initiating	Will require inputs and coordination across departments	Q4-2027
C1	Urban Parks Strategy	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	J. Pathak	Project Underway	Phase I Consultant Awarded, Background Study and Draft Terms of Reference being developed for Phase II	Q2-2026
C2	Parks Redevelopment Strategy and Implementation Plan	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	J. Pathak	Project Underway	Consultant procurement anticipated Q2 2025	Q4-2026
C3	Off-Leash Dog Area Policy and Implementation Plan	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	J. Pathak	Project Underway	Stakeholder and Community Engagement Underway	Q4-2025
C4	2023 Pop-up Off-leash Dog Area Pilot Program	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	J. Pathak	Project Underway	Data is being collected and summary report being prepared for Q1 2025	Q4-2025
C5	Parking Naming Policy Update	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	J. Pathak	Project Underway	Draft Policy Update prepared with cross commission working group	Q4-2025
C6	Community Gardens Maintenance Program	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	S. Tippet	Ongoing, Annual Program	2025 season is underway	Ongoing

Project		Staff Support	Status	Comments	Anticipated Completion	
Name/Study	Lead					
C7	Gateway Master Plan Update	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	S. Tippett	On hold	Phase II to be initiated	On hold
C8	Park Development Capital Delivery Program	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	S. Tippett	Program Underway	Projects in various stages from design to warranty	Varies 2025-2028
C9	Park Asset Lifecycle Replacement Program	Parks Planning, Design & Construction	S. Tippett	Program Underway	Asset Replacement projects in various stages from design to warranty	Varies 2025-2026
C10	Park Renaissance and Public Realm Capital Delivery Program	Parks Planning, Design, Construction	S. Tippett	Program Underway	Projects in various stages from design to warranty	Varies 2025-2026
C11	Park Development Guidelines	Parks Planning, Design, Construction	S. Tippett	Initiating	Preparing to procure consultant	Q2-2026
C12	Parkland Dedication Bylaw Update	Parks Planning, Design, Construction	J. Pathak	Initiating	Stakeholder engagement underway	Q1-2026
D1	Development Application Review Process Improvements	Development Planning				
	ePLAN Improvements	Development Planning	S. Lue	Ongoing	Ongoing improvements and Monitoring	Q3/4-2025, Q1/2 2026 (phased)
	MappiT Improvements	Development Planning	S. Lue	Ongoing	Ongoing improvements and Monitoring	On hold
	Electronic 3D Model	Development Planning	S. Lue, J. Yeh	Ongoing	Implementation into work programs	Q3-2025
	Plan of Subdivision Process Improvements	Development Planning	G. Cescato	Ongoing	Preparing to launch	Q4-2025
	New Development Fee By-law Implementation	Development Planning	S. Lue	Ongoing	Ongoing Monitoring	Q4-2025

Project		Staff Support	Status	Comments	Anticipated Completion	
Name/Study	Lead					
	Response to Provincial Legislation Changes	Development Planning	S. Lue, B. Roberts, J. Yeh	Ongoing	Ongoing improvements and Monitoring	Q4-2025
	File Closure Protocols	Development Planning	S. Lue, S. Bordone, G. Whitfield, J. Yeh	Ongoing	Draft protocol under review	Q1-2025
	Standard Operation Procedure	Development Planning	S. Lue, S. Bordone, B. Manoharan	Ongoing	Draft templates and site plan procedure	2025-2026
	Updated Process for Zoning Order Framework	Development Planning	S. Lue, D. Brutto	Ongoing	Project Charter Draft	Q3-2025
	Standard Drawing Templates	Development Planning	S. Lue	Ongoing	Project Charter Drafted	Q2-2025
D2	Comprehensive Zoning By-law	DFO	B. Roberts, G. Day	Ongoing	Clarifying Provisions	Q2-2025
D3	Implications from Bill 109, Bill 23, and Bill 97	Development Planning	S. Lue	Project Underway	Continuous Improvements and Monitoring	Ongoing
D4	Ontario Land Tribunal – Improvements to Internal	Development Planning	G. Cescato, S. Lue	Ongoing	Continuous Improvements and Monitoring	Ongoing
D5	Markham Village Heritage Conservation District – New District Plan	Heritage	R. Hutcheson, E. Manning, P. Wokral	Project Underway	Terms of Reference being finalized, Preparing New Plan Document	Q1-2026
D6	Heritage Register – Priority Designation Program and New Inventory Project	Heritage	E. Manning	Project Underway	Property Designations Proceeding	Q4-2025
D7	Telecommunication Protocol Implementation	Development Planning	S. Lue	Monitoring	Continuous Improvements and Monitoring	Q4-2025
D8	Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee	Development Planning	S. Lue	Project Underway	Monitoring and Continuous Improvement	Q4-2025

Project		Staff Support	Status	Comments	Anticipated Completion	
Name/Study	Lead					
D9	Visioning Exercise Workplan for the Bayview Avenue and John Street Area	Development Planning	R. Cefaratti	Project Underway	Preparation of the Public and Stakeholder Consultation	Q2-2025
D10	City's Street Naming Process Update	DFO	B. Roberts, R. Tadmire	Project Underway	Draft Process being developed	Q1-2025
D11	Special Events – Doors Open Markham and Heritage Markham 50 th Anniversary, Heritage Week Display, Heritage Awards of Excellence	Heritage	R. Hutcheson	Projects Underway	DOM meets monthly and HM has created a separate 50 th Anniversary Sub-Committee, Heritage Week is third week in Feb, Awards Event planned for October	Q4-2025
D12	Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan Update- Yonge Street Height	Heritage	R. Hutcheson	Initiating	Directed by Council	Q2-2025
D13	Heritage Financial Assistance Program	Heritage	P. Wokral	Projects Underway	Two existing grant programs, Heritage Property Tax Rebate program and proposal for continuation of the Designated Heritage Property Tax Program after 2025.	Q3-2025