




## MEMORANDUM

FROM: Jim Baird, Commissioner of Development Services 

TO: Development Services Committee

PREPARED BY: Richard Kendall, Manager of Development, Central District  
Brian Lee, Senior Manager, Special Projects, Engineering  
Tim Lambe, Policy and Research Division

DATE: May 6, 2014

RE: **URA Presentation to Development Services Committee**

---

Unionville Ratepayers Association (URA) has prepared a presentation outlining growth projections for Markham Centre using a number of timeframes – 2016, 2023 and 2031. URA is concerned that recent development approvals and current development applications could result in the population within Ward 3 and Markham Centre in particular growing faster than anticipated, and that development within Markham Centre may exceed the City's projections for the 2031 timeframe by 2023. The presentation also discusses infrastructure that was previously identified in the City's Transportation Study Up-date for Markham Centre that is required to support the City's development projections for 2031. The URA presentation was previously presented to Staff and the local Councillor on March 26, 2014, and was also the subject of a presentation to the Markham Centre Advisory on April 24, 2014.

### **Population**

Planning Staff reviewed the material provided by URA and wish to comment as follows. City population forecasts are prepared by York Region and incorporated into the Region and City Official Plans. The current population forecasts for Markham identified in the Official Plans are:

- 2006 273,000
- 2016 337,800
- 2021 370,300
- 2026 398,300
- 2031 421,600

Based on York Region forecasts the estimated 2011 population for the City was approximately 309,200.

York Region also reports annual mid-year estimates of population reflecting dwelling unit completions. Since 2011, the City's estimated population has been tracking approximately one to two percent higher than the suggested prorated forecasts for the period between 2011 and 2016. This percentage difference is considered minor. Market demand for housing is subject to a broad range of socio-economic factors; whereas the housing market has been in a positive cycle, market demand and land absorption can be expected to vary over time.

### **Markham Centre**

Forecasts for Markham Centre were undertaken in 2009 in support of Markham's Growth Management Strategy. These forecasts were undertaken relative to the land budget assumptions underlying the new Official Plan – i.e. to forecast land absorption and land requirements by housing type, and in the case of high density housing, to identify the forecast distribution of required land supply across the City's intensification areas. These forecasts assumed that Markham Centre would absorb a high proportion of the City's high density units, but Markham Centre would not need to be fully built out to meet the City's forecast demand for high density units to 2031 (given the other intensification areas also available). Unit and population estimates identified for Markham Centre at that time were:

	<u>Units</u>	<u>Population</u>
• 2011	4,855	9,975
• 2016	8,105	16,150
• 2021	10,055	19,715
• 2026	12,865	25,065
• 2031	14,800	28,650

Prorating these forecasts to obtain estimates for 2013 and 2023 results in the following:

	<u>Units</u>	<u>Population</u>
• 2013	6,155	12,445
• 2023	11,180	21,855

The City's Growth Strategy (2009) prorated 2023 values of 11,180 units and 21,855 persons are lower than the URA forecasts of 13,424 units and 26,061 persons. The differences amount to about 2,200 units and 4,200 persons. The principal reason for the differences appears to be the inclusion in the URA forecasts of approximately 2,300 units that have Council approval, or are currently proposed, but were not known or reflected in the 2009 forecasts.

CMHC completions data show that over the 10 years from 2004 through 2013, the City absorbed an average of 638 apartment units per year (highest yearly number, 942 units). The URA analysis is suggesting that between 2013 and 2023 Markham Centre alone will absorb 10,021 units or 1,000 units per year. While the URA forecasts are based on development applications, the actual market take-up and translation into building permits and actual construction remains to be seen.

### **Transportation**

A fundamental aspect of a Provincial Growth Centre is providing a mix of uses to minimize external trips to and from the centre. URA's presentation identified a number of transportation and road improvements which were part of the Markham Centre Transportation Study Up-date prepared by IBI for the City in 2012. Staff note that the infrastructure components that are within the City's direct control are proceeding through the EA, design and construction processes, within the 2023 timeline suggested by URA as follows:

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Birchmount Road Rouge Crossing      | Bridge scheduled to open in July, 2014                                  |
| • Verclaire Gate Rouge River Crossing | Design to commence in 2014  |
| • Sciberras Road Rouge River Crossing | Pending development and EA, could occur within a ten year timeframe     |
| • Enterprise Blvd extension to Rodick | EA is underway  |
| • Miller Ave ext Warden/Birchmount    | EA approved – construction dependant on property issues and development |

In addition to the improvements identified above, Rodick Road is now open from Highway 7 to Esna Park (2012) and staff are actively involved with implementing Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures in conjunction with development approvals. Significant work on the cycling and path systems is underway and the Markham Centre Mobility Hub Study has been endorsed and should commence shortly. These elements all contribute to achieving the City's transportation goals for Markham Centre.

With respect to the higher level transit improvements identified by URA, these are under the control of other levels of government and subject to available funding. VIVA's rapidway is funded and construction along Highway 7 is advanced. The section through Markham Centre (Next Phase H3.4) is also funded and preliminary engineering and design work has commenced. This will be a design-build-finance project which includes two sections within Markham Centre. The primary focus at this time is the Civic Mall / Simcoe Promenade section of dedicated rapidway between Birchmount Road and Sciberras Road. The project has aggressive timelines which include the issuance of a Request for Design-Build proposals in June, 2014, with anticipated commencement of construction in the Fall of 2015, after the Pan Am games. YRT has also rationalized some of their bus routes and is seeing significant ridership increases on its express buses from Unionville GO Station to the Finch subway station in Toronto.

It is noted that an EA is currently underway for all day GO rail service on the Stouffville line serving Markham Centre, and is expected to be completed by June 2014. When funding is available, this is a priority item for GO to implement.

The EA for the Highway 407 transitway has been completed to Kennedy Road. It is anticipated that the Mobility Hub study will further address the design and alignment of the transitway through Markham Centre. The construction of the 407 transitway is outside of Metrolinx's 15 year capital programme. In the interim, GO buses are operating along Highway 407.

### **Conclusion**

The City's Growth Management Strategy projected approximately 20,000 dwelling units in Markham Centre, with a corresponding population of 41,000 persons, and 39,000 employees. Recent market trends and applications have reflected a strong interest in higher density residential development. To-date, Council has approved approximately 1,800 more residential units than contemplated in the Growth Strategy. At the same time, there has been a lower demand for employment uses. With the endorsement of the Mobility Hub study, the development projections for Markham Centre will be further reviewed and up-dated. This study and up-dates to the Markham Centre Transportation Study will inform future amendments to the Markham Centre Secondary Plan. Staff will provide up-dates to Committee as the Mobility Hub Study advances.