

New Official Plan Review – Committee Recommendations
Agriculture Policy Subcommittee
January 10, 2013

Attendees	Staff
Regional Councillor Gord Landon	Lilli Duoba
Ruth Brock	Elizabeth Wimmer
Kim Empringham	Ruth Rendon
Guy Farintosh	
Bryant Hulshaf	
Maria Poulos	

The Agricultural Advisory Committee is pleased to provide the City of Markham comments on the new Official Plan. The Committee supports the approach taken by Markham in protecting remaining agricultural lands from non-agricultural uses and ensuring policies are included to support secondary uses to support viable farming operations. The Committee wishes to continue to be engaged in agricultural policy related issues and to assist the City with ideas and opportunities on how to address continued agricultural activity in the context of continued urbanization

The Agricultural Advisory Committee recommends that the following comments be endorsed and provided to the City of Markham for input into the new Official Plan:

1. Policy 3.1.1.1a) directs development away from non agricultural lands in the Greenway System. The Committee suggest using the words 'away from natural heritage features' to improve clarity.
2. Policy 5.2.1.1b) identifies the protection of agricultural lands from loss to other uses to the 'greatest extent possible'. The words 'greatest extent possible' seems to weaken the protection policy and the removal of these words would strengthen the policies. *The Committee suggests that the wording 'to the greatest extent possible' be removed.*
3. Policy 5.2.1.3 c) in the new draft Official Plan identifies 'retail'. It is not clear that the retail reference is only to agricultural related retail. *The Committee suggests that this be clarified to only apply to agricultural and farm related retail.*
4. Policy 5.2.2.3 in the new draft Official Plan dealing with community gardens seems to be specific only to public lands and not private lands. Community gardens should be permitted in all land uses. *The Committee suggests that the policy on community gardens be clarified to support the use on public and private lands.* In addition, the policy on community gardens should be clear that community gardens would be permitted in residential and non residential areas where appropriate. *The Committee suggests that the policy be clarified to support community gardens in all land use designations where appropriate and feasible.*

5. Policy 8.8.1.2d) does not mention tree farms in the list of 'normal farm practices'. The Committee suggests that tree farms be identified under the examples of normal farm practices.
6. Policy 8.8. 1.2f) lists non- agricultural uses and includes sod and horse farms. These farms are registered farm businesses which are eligible to receive the 25% tax rate. *The Committee suggests that sod and horse farms be moved from the 'non-agricultural' list to the 'normal farm practices'.*
7. Policy 8.8.1.5d) requires that all buildings associated with Secondary Uses be located in close proximity to the primary farm buildings. Clustering of buildings may be conflict with bio-security requirements. *The Committee suggests additional flexibility be provided by adding the words 'where appropriate'.*
8. Policy 1.2 does not adequately address the rural agricultural history of Markham. The Committee suggests that the last paragraph include references to the continued agricultural community in Markham.
9. Policy 2.3a) includes the words 'rural purposes' which suggests that additional non agricultural uses would be accommodated. The Committee suggests that the words 'rural purposes' be removed.
10. Policy 3.1.1.1e) deals with public access and trails. The Committee suggests adding the words 'where appropriate' to ensure there is no suggestion of trail access within agricultural lands.
11. Policy 8.1.5 which addresses minimum distance separation formulae. The Committee suggests that the policy also include 'Greenway System'.
12. Policy 8.6.1.2 suggests that farming activities would not be permitted inside of the vegetation protection zones. The Committee recommends that flexibility be provided to ensure existing agricultural operations can continue on lands that could become a vegetation protection zone.