



Report to: General Committee

Report Date: June 1, 2015

SUBJECT: Shared Places Our Spaces, Markham's Public Realm Strategy
PREPARED BY: Brett Lucyk, Public Realm Coordinator, ext. 2700
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RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the staff report titled "Shared Places Our Spaces - Markham's Public Realm Strategy", dated April 7, 2015 be received;
- 2) And that the document "Shared Places Our Spaces - Markham's Public Realm Strategy" dated April 7, 2015 be approved in principle;
- 3) And that the 2016 funding requirement of \$150,000 will be considered as part of the 2016 budget process;
- 4) And that Capital project designs include a public realm component and the funding source be confirmed prior to proceeding with the project;
- 5) And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval for *Shared Places Our Spaces, Markham's Public Realm Strategy*, which was approved in principle by Council in May 2014. The public engagement process authorized by Council in 2014 was undertaken and informed the final Strategy document and the recommendations regarding the implementation of the City's public realm strategy.

BACKGROUND:

The public realm contributes to a quality of life that attracts and retains diverse and talented residents, supports a community-wide commitment to lifelong active living and learning, and advances Markham's future prosperity in a rapidly growing creative and knowledge-based economy.

The importance of the public realm is identified in the *New Official Plan*, the *Greenprint*, *Building Markham's Future Together*, the *Integrated Leisure Master Plan*, and the *Culture Plan*. The 2015 Corporate Business Plan identifies the implementation of the Public Realm Strategy as a Community Corporate goal within the Engaged Diverse and Thriving City section of Excellence Markham Framework. There are many policies, programs and practices in various city departments that enhance the public realm, but until now, there has been no cross-commission, city-wide framework that ensures our public realm is successfully delivered.

In 2014, the Public Realm Draft Strategy *Shared Place Our Spaces* was brought forward to Council and approved in principle. At that time the recommendations for public consultation were also approved.

In October and November 2014 public consultation was conducted by the City of Markham, with the assistance of 8-80 Cities, a non-profit organization with expertise with public consultation.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Markham's Public Realm Strategy is a plan to ensure that all who live, work and play within our City share ownership and responsibility and aspire to create and maintain our great public spaces.

The intent of the document is to raise awareness about the importance and benefits of the public realm and its role in creating a great city. The document provides a review of best practices, and identifies the City's current practices and policies; gaps and areas for improvements; areas of focus; and action items as part of an implementation strategy. Overall, the goal is to raise the awareness of staff, residents, visitors, developers and businesses owners of the importance of the public realm as well as identifying their roles for ensuring its success.

8-80 Cities was retained to assist the City of Markham in conducting the Community Engagement process and provide recommendations.

8-80 Cities is a non-profit organization based in Toronto. It is dedicated to contributing to the transformation of cities into places where people can walk, bike, access public transit and visit vibrant parks and public places. The organization engages people and communities and inspires the creation of cities that are easily accessible, safe and enjoyable for all. City of Markham and 8-80 staff conducted four meet and greets at community centres, six invited workshops, a public survey, presented at various Committees and attended two large community events. The events enabled us to reach out to residents and stakeholders throughout the City. The Community engagement responses were tabulated and analyzed within the accompanying report, Appendix A, Community Engagement Results, prepared by 8-80 Cities. The recommendations for the next steps of the process are:

- Detailed place-based public consultation;
- Implement short-term pilot projects; and
- Internal City of Markham Department Relationship Building

Detailed Place-Based Public Consultation

This recommendation will engage residents to determine exactly what they would like to see in their specific park, street or public space. The focus will be on a plan for how residents would like to see their local space animated.

Implement Short-Term Pilot Projects

Public engagement results can be utilized to provide community "quick wins" through pilot projects. Pilot projects, such as providing benches, public art, community gardens or activities, that are quick, inexpensive and achievable in the short term will go a long way to engage the community and begin laying the ground work for larger, long term projects.

Internal City of Markham Departmental Relationship Building

An effective and successful public realm relies on internal City departments working co-operatively and collaboratively on public realm improvement issues.

Markham's Public Realm Strategy, *Shared Places Our Spaces* establishes areas for improvement in the delivery of the public realm focusing on five goals & objectives:

1. Made in Markham Innovation and Design,
2. Keep Markham Beautiful,
3. Animate Our Neighbourhoods and Districts,
4. Harmonize Our Efforts and Sharing Resources, and
5. Create Gateways and Destinations.

Made in Markham Innovation and Design

Markham's public realm strategy will deliver high quality opportunities city-wide by applying innovative design standards, comprehensive oversight measures, precise construction practices and thorough inspection processes within our new development, capital and redevelopment projects. Markham has established many policies and programs that identify the importance of developing and maintaining a great public realm (new *Official Plan*, *Greenprint*, *Building Markham's Future Together* etc). This strategy will provide a foundation to coordinate these efforts and to build on Markham's record of success for innovation and design.

Keep Markham Beautiful

Our public realm needs the support of residents and businesses to maintain and beautify private and public properties. Maintenance of both private and public lands is a key component to a successful public realm. An attractive and well maintained public realm sends a clear message that the residents, businesses and users care for their living environment. Elements of our public realm help keep Markham beautiful and include well-maintained green assets, promotion and care of our heritage areas and well-maintained public and private properties. It is imperative that the City, residents and businesses work together to promote current programs and devise new initiatives as the City grows.

Animate Our Neighbourhoods and Districts

Our public realm spaces are essential in celebrating Markham's cultural diversity and inclusivity by encouraging community engagement and use of our community facilities and public spaces. Celebrations range from single meditative-use in a local park, to the Canada Day celebration in Milne Park, to the Markham Santa Claus Parade or the RBC Milliken Children's Festival at the Civic Centre. A diversity of functional, safe and well-maintained public realm spaces allows for flexible programming and a wide variety of potential events. Involving the community in the design and approach to our community events will ensure our public realm spaces are vibrant channels for us to celebrate Markham's cultural diversity that appropriately and effectively respond to community needs. Community engagement is critical to the successful use of public spaces and Markham will continue to nurture and refine our current relationships as well as forge

new initiatives with a strong focus on inclusivity and opportunities for those of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

Harmonize Our Efforts and Sharing Our Resources

Markham has long standing relationships with corporate and community groups. It is essential for Council, staff, residents, businesses, as well as resident and service groups to coordinate efforts to create a vibrant public realm. Existing programs must be assessed and new relationships established in order to respond to ever changing community needs and expectations.

Investment in the public realm relies on raising awareness of our community infrastructure, recognizing partnership prospects, setting clear practices for investment and pursuing sustainable opportunities.

Create Gateways and Destinations

A great public realm creates memorable gateways and destinations within our City that provide lasting impressions for visitors and residents of Markham. Our public realm defines our City and distinguishes our neighbourhoods. The expression of the public realm is critical in 'placemaking' and supports the development of civic identity and pride. Residents and visitors to Markham should immediately recognize our community as they enter our City limits and move throughout our neighbourhoods.

Recommended Next Steps

The next steps for the Public Realm Strategy is to establish work programs related to the action items within the document. This work will include determining champions, explore funding, creation of budgets and determination of timelines for the completion of the action items. The Public Realm Staff Working Team will coordinate their efforts with the specific impacted Departments and staff.

As highlighted within the 8-80 Cities recommendations and our action items, the selection of small pilot projects that demonstrate our community based approach and response will provide clear examples of our commitment. Public input will be continually sought and incorporated within the projects we undertake.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE

Funding decisions for the Public Realm Strategy will be done annually through business planning and budget preparation that will be reviewed and approved through the City's budget process. The 2016 funding requirement in the amount of \$150,000 will be considered as part of the 2016 budget process. The 2015 capital project in the amount of \$150,000 was funded from the Federal Gas Tax revenue. The existing initiatives are currently funded and this strategy enables the work to be accomplished in a manner that will improve the outcomes for the Public Realm.

As capital works and other projects are considered, both budgeting allocation and additional funding sources will be confirmed prior to proceeding and may include

Development Charge revenue, increase in property taxes, Section 37 developer contributions, donations, sponsorships, community engagement and volunteering. As more detailed information is available through the action items of the Public Realm Strategy, Markham staff and Council will then be in a better position to analyze the financial and service delivery impacts of each individual action item. Staff will consider how a sustainable fund source for the strategy can be established.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Markham's Diversity Action Plan - Everyone Welcome will be reviewed and the pertinent recommendations and actions will be integrated in the advancement of the work related to the Public Realm Strategy.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Sustainability and environmental health are important components of every public realm project. Interconnected natural areas provide opportunities for walkways and trails, improve air quality and microclimates while supporting ecological diversity. Well-designed and well-maintained streets, cycleways and walkways enhance our commuting experience and provide alternate and healthy ways to get around. Providing residents the opportunities for local leisure activities, walkable communities and alternate transportation modes helps reduce the environmental impact.

In concert with our supporting strategies and official plans, the preservation and protection of natural areas and processes is fundamental to a successful public realm and critical to the long term health of our City and our residents.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS:

The Public Realm Working Team will work closely with the Communications and Community Engagement Committee to develop a robust communications and community engagement plan to support the objectives of the Public Realm Strategy.

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

The Accessibility Guidelines are an important design component and will be integral in the advancement of the work related to the Public Realm Strategy. Sustainability Office and Human Resources staff are members of the Public Realm Working Team and provide input on an ongoing basis.

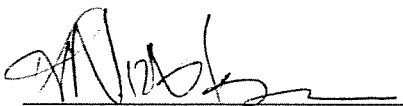
ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The Public Realm Strategy is closely aligned with *Building Markham's Future Together*, the *GreenPrint*, *Official Plan*, *Integrated Leisure Master Plan* and the *Culture Plan*. Effective and engaging public spaces are positive outcomes for growth management. Accessible pathways allow for sustainable transportation; public space enhancements have environmental and cultural benefits; municipal infrastructure will be improved when the public realm is considered in planning and capital improvements. All public spaces will take safety into consideration. Civic engagement will encourage input from our diverse community.

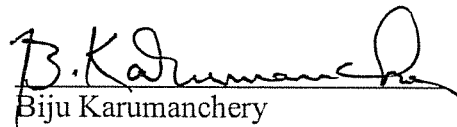
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

The Public Realm Staff Working Team includes members from Operations, Planning and Urban Design, Heritage Planning, Engineering, Sustainability Office, Bylaw Enforcement and Licensing, Culture, Markham Public Library, Human Resources and Corporate Communications and Community Engagement. Contributions have also been made by York Region and the Public Realm Advisory Committee. The Heritage Markham Committee reviewed the document, from a heritage perspective, on March 11, 2015 and indicated its support. In addition, a presentation of the Public Realm Strategy was provided for the Public Realm Advisory Committee on March 30.

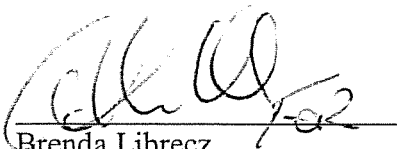
RECOMMENDED BY:



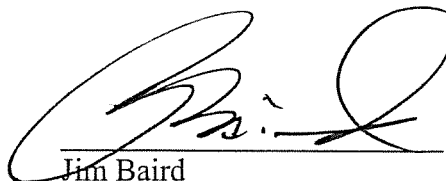
Bob Nicholson
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ATTACHMENTS:

Shared Places Our Spaces, Markham's Public Realm Strategy
Appendix A, Community Engagement Results, January 2015.