

Markham's New Official Plan



Towards a Sustainable Community



April, 2011



Context for Managing Growth



Markham Growth Forecasts: Population & Employment		
	Population	Employment
2006	273,000	144,800
2009	303,000	160,000
2031	421,600	240,400

Source: York Region Official Plan and the Town of Markham

Province of Ontario

The Province has passed legislation and approved plans that together form a comprehensive strategy for accommodating population and employment growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). This provincial strategy is intended to support the creation of strong communities, and enhance quality of life, environmental protection and economic growth in Ontario.

Three Plans defining this strategy are:

- Greenbelt Plan (2005) - which outlines areas within the Region of York where environmental protection is predominant and urban development is not allowed to occur.
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Places to Grow) (2006) - which outlines requirements for accommodating growth to 2031, focusing on the planning and development of complete communities.
- Regional Transportation Plan (The Big Move) (2008) - outlines a 25 year transportation plan to support the land use and growth proposed by the Growth Plan.

The Growth Plan emphasizes accommodating growth by directing a portion of new development to existing built-up areas. The Growth Plan requires that a minimum of 40% of all new residential development across each Region in the GGH take place within built up areas, and be achieved largely through intensification. It also outlines certain density targets for population and employment growth in built-up and new urban areas. All municipalities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe including the Region of York and Markham must amend their Official Plans to address the requirements of the provincial plans.

Region of York

In response to the provincial plans, the Region of York prepared a new Official Plan (ROP) which was approved by the Province in September 2010 and is presently under appeal at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). **The ROP allocates population and employment growth to the Region's nine local municipalities, including Markham. Markham's 2031 population and employment growth forecasts as set by the Region are identified above.**

In September 2010, the Region adopted Amendment No. 3 to the ROP to incorporate additional lands in northwest Markham into the Urban Area to accommodate some of the growth to 2031 assigned to Markham. This Amendment is also under appeal at the OMB.

Building Markham's Future Together



Building Markham's Future Together - Towards a Sustainable Community represents Markham's strategic direction and is the foundation for Markham's future planning and actions.

Through the *Click with Markham* campaign, residents, local businesses, and other interested parties were asked to share their thoughts on Markham's future direction. Six strategic priorities (Environment, Growth Management, Transportation/Transit, Municipal Services, Parks, Recreation, Culture and Library, and Diversity) were identified through this campaign. Since then, Markham has developed a number of Action Plans to support those priorities including: Markham's Greenprint (Sustainability Plan), Markham 2020 (Economic Strategy), Integrated Leisure Master Plan and Diversity Plan. The new Official Plan will also be one of these strategic documents.

Endorsed Growth Alternative to 2031

In May 2010, Markham Council endorsed an alternative for growth to 2031. The alternative addresses provincial legislation, regional growth requirements and Markham's planning preferences and forms the basis for preparing a new Official Plan. The endorsed growth alternative incorporates intensification within the built up area to optimize the use of land and infrastructure and create more sustainable, higher density, mixed use communities that will:

- Reduce reliance on the automobile by providing transit supportive densities making it more feasible to provide efficient public transit
- Provide a variety of housing choices to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying population and an adequate range of housing by type, tenure and affordability
- Provide for a more diverse and compatible mix of land uses that accommodate employment opportunities for local residents and offer live-work choices

Intensification within the Built-Up Areas

Markham's intensification strategy provides direction on where residential and employment intensification should occur relative to the delivery of proposed rapid transit improvements. Current estimates suggest the majority of new residential units to be provided via intensification over the next 20 years can be accommodated in four categories of intensification areas: Regional Centres, Key Development Areas, Major Corridors, Local Centres and Corridors.



Recognizing that new development directed to intensification areas must be appropriate in scale and context to existing neighbourhood and employment areas, Council has endorsed Built Form, Massing and Height Guidelines to assist in regulating built form within intensifying areas and provide input into the new Official Plan urban design policies.

Markham's Official Plan



Markham's current Official Plan was originally adopted in 1976 and approved in 1978. A partial update of the Plan was adopted in 1987 and approved in 1993. The Plan incorporates over 300 amendments and 46 Secondary Plans.

What is an Official Plan?

Over the next year, Markham will be preparing a new Official Plan that will address provincial and **regional requirements and Markham's preferences for planning its future. An Official Plan is a statutory document that sets out land use policy to guide future development and to manage growth. It establishes land use designations and provides for:**

- Land use planning policies to manage and direct physical change and effects on the social, economic and natural environment
- Guidance regarding how land assigned to specific designations should be used and developed
- **Coordination of future growth to meet Markham's needs within a planned physical structure**
- A policy framework for establishing more localized land use and zoning provisions, including regulations and development standards, such as the size of lots and building heights
- Policy guidance to meet Markham, Region and Provincial interests and to evaluate and reach decisions on potential land use conflicts
- The provision of municipal services to support such growth

Markham's current Official Plan will be reviewed as part of the work leading to preparation of a new Official Plan. The new Official Plan will be adopted by Council under the Planning Act and will be approved by the Region of York.



Strategic Objectives to guide the Official Plan process

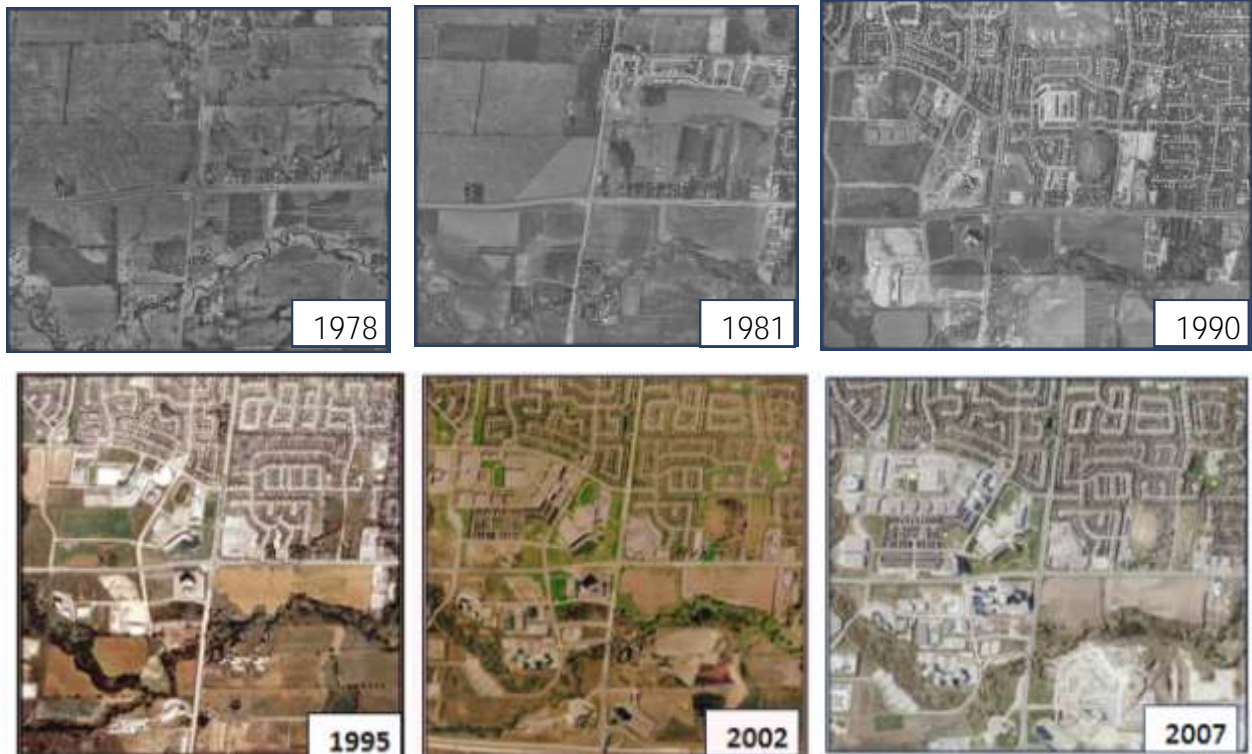
To guide the Official Plan review process, Markham has developed a set of strategic objectives. These may be refined through the process of preparing a new Official Plan. These objectives are:

- To **promote and expand upon Markham's leadership and innovation** in planning, urban design, civil engineering, and development standards and compliance, and the integration of planning and development with all aspects of municipal management and operations.
- To **develop sustainable, compact and complete communities** incorporating healthy active living, excellence in community design, efficient infrastructure, housing choices for all, and facilities and services meeting community needs.
- To **establish an inter-connected Greenway System** within Markham, protecting and enhancing existing natural heritage and hydrologic features and supporting biodiversity.
- To **effectively move people and goods** within and beyond Markham by providing residents, employees and businesses with choices and accessibility in travel and movement, with particular attention to the promotion of increased transit ridership and active travel, including cycling and walking.
- To **increase adaptability in the community** through green infrastructure (water, waste, energy), innovative technology, resource conservation and other sustainable practices to address long term climate change impacts.
- To **maintain a prosperous and competitive economy**, by accommodating a balanced and diverse range of employment opportunities, protecting employment lands, supporting a knowledge-based economy and promoting culture and tourism.
- To **sustain a local food system** by protecting agricultural lands, encouraging urban food production and supporting complementary agri-business activities.
- To **celebrate Markham's unique character** by protecting cultural and heritage resources, establishing landmarks and creating attractive and engaging public spaces to foster interactions between people and connections to their community.
- To **celebrate cultural diversity** and uniqueness in Markham through planning for the needs of all members of the community.
- To **engage the community** in the continuing process of planning and growth management, including the preparation of the new Official Plan.
- To **manage growth and development** through monitoring, phasing and the delivery of public infrastructure and community services.

This document highlights some of the policy directions being proposed for the new Official Plan as they relate to the environment, agriculture, the economy and employment, transportation and community building.



Markham's Future Structure



The above series of photos show the lands at Highway 7 and Warden Avenue and illustrates the significant change in this area of Markham as it has developed from 1978 to 2007.

Markham's Future Structure

Markham's physical structure reflects a combination of elements including:

- Historical patterns of development
- Past planning decisions
- Presence and preservation of significant natural features
- Location of transportation routes
- Senior government controls over the use of land

What are the principal components of Markham's structure?

Figure 1 illustrates components of Markham's future structure and provides a spatial framework for policy directions. The future structure of Markham will be influenced by:

- The proposed Greenway System
- Increased development focused in centres and corridors served by rapid transit
- Retention and careful management of existing community and employment areas

Figure 1 identifies the proposed future structure for Markham, based on the growth alternative endorsed by Council in 2010.

Markham's Future Structure

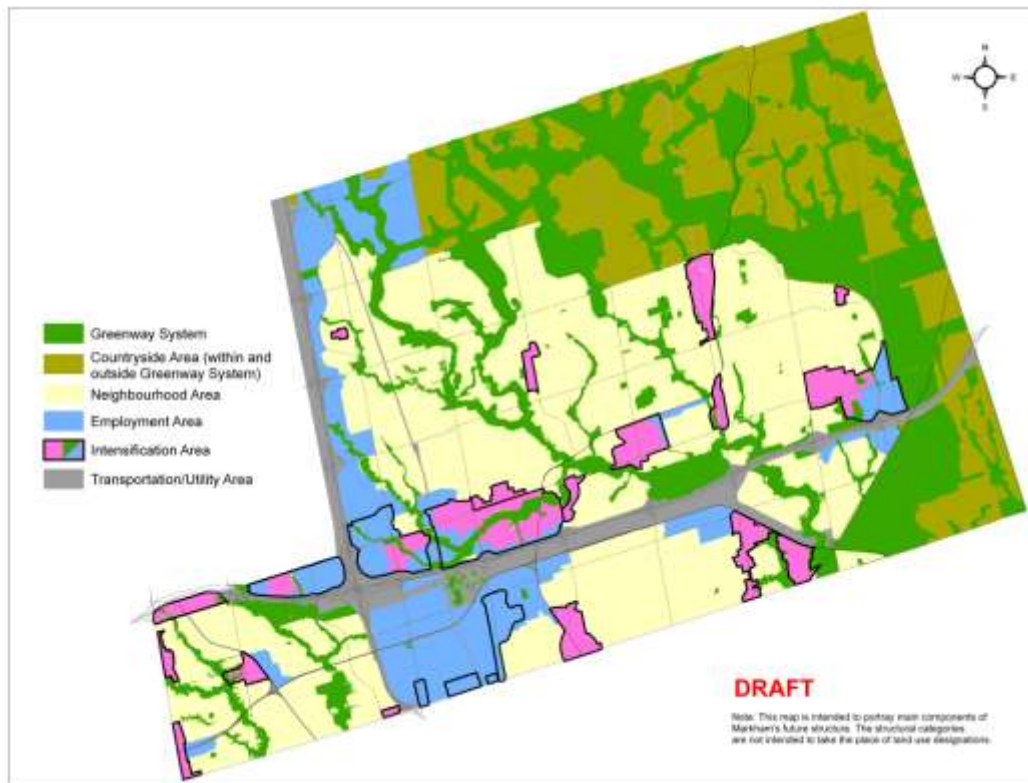


Figure 1: Components of Markham's Future Structure

The components of the proposed Markham structure include:

Greenway System - natural heritage lands including lands within the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine, Rouge Park and proposed enhancement areas, to be protected based on their environmental significance.

Countryside Area - including lands outside the urban area, within and outside the Greenway System, available for agriculture and including hamlets.

Neighbourhood Area - including residential lands, developed primarily in ground-related housing forms, together with lands devoted to supporting parkland, institutional, retail and service uses.

Employment Area - including lands for office development, business park uses and complementary, supporting services.

Intensification Area - as identified in the intensification hierarchy forming part of the endorsed growth alternative, lands identified for residential and employment intensification.

Transportation/Utility Area - relating primarily to lands used for the 400 series highways, and major hydro and utility corridors.

Protect the Natural Environment



The new Official Plan will build upon Markham's existing environmental protection policies. In 2009, Markham completed an Environmental and Policy Review and Consolidation Study which recommended that Markham identify and protect a Greenway System. The proposed Greenway System will provide for:

- **Protection of Markham's waterways, woodlands and wetlands**
- East-west ecological corridors connecting natural features and sub watersheds and
- Protection for agriculture on lands forming part of the Greenway System

Figure 2 below identifies the proposed Greenway System and enhancement areas.

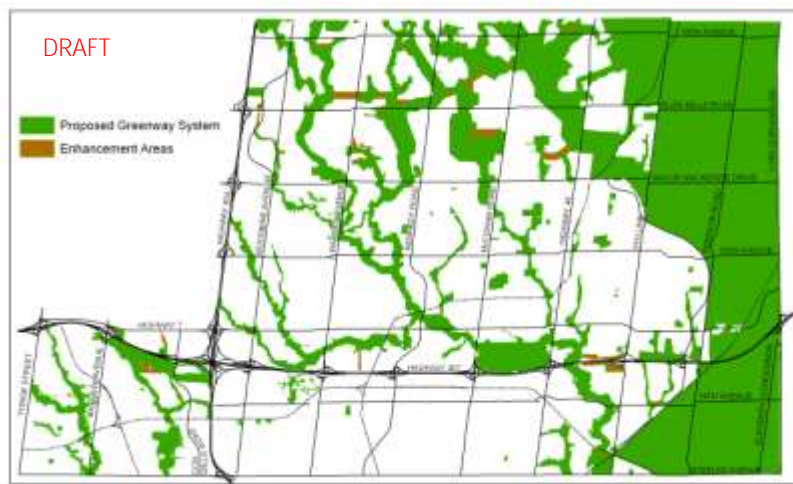


Figure 2: Proposed Greenway System



Key Policy Directions

Key policy directions for the new Official Plan will include:

- Identifying and protecting an interconnected Greenway System
- Protecting natural heritage and hydrological features and their functions
- Implementing the requirements of the Province and the Region in regard to the Provincial Policy Statement, Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt Plans and the Region's Greenlands System
- Identifying ecological linkages and biodiversity nodes
- Policies to protect habitat for significant wildlife and endangered and threatened species
- Identifying the Rouge Park and Preliminary Rouge North Protection Area

Protect Agricultural Lands



The Regional Land Evaluation Area Review (LEAR) **confirmed farmlands in Markham as 'prime' within the context of the provincial classification system.** Farmlands in Markham are part of a much larger pattern of agri-business and food production in the Region, GTA and Province.

In 2009, Markham completed an Agricultural Assessment Study which concluded that a viable and sustainable agricultural presence could be achieved within the context of the Growth Plan requirements. However, there are challenges given

that a high proportion of farmland in Markham is owned by non-farmers. These lands remain available for **farming and Markham's policies will continue to support farming activities, as well as encourage resident interests in food production within the existing urban area (such as community gardens) and new communities.**

Key Policy Directions

Key policy directions for the new Official Plan include:

- Ensuring that lands not identified for growth or environmental protection remain available for long term agricultural use (Generally these lands are identified as Countryside on Figure 1)
- Establishing policies that encourage and support agricultural activity
- Facilitating opportunities for urban agriculture (home gardens, community gardens and small scale urban agriculture) within the existing urban area and new communities



Maintain Economic Competitiveness



Markham has a strong economy and is a major employment centre within York Region. Today, Markham has the **second largest share of the Region's employment amongst the local municipalities in York** and is **expected to maintain this position through 2031**. Even with Markham's high employment densities, some additional land, well located to attract and accommodate business, is required outside the current urban area to address continued employment growth to 2031.



A healthy economy relies on Markham being attractive to business by offering a variety of accommodation (land and buildings) options and good transportation access. Knowledge-based industries present preferred business and employment **growth opportunities for Markham**. **Markham's Economic Competitiveness Strategy, "Markham 2020", will guide Markham's business and employment**

growth with a focus on four target sectors: Convergence of Information and Communications Technology and Life Sciences; Information, Entertainment and Cultural Industries; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and Finance and Insurance.

Key Policy Directions

Key policy directions for the new Official Plan will include:

- Retaining existing and accommodating new employment
 - Protect existing business park lands
 - Add new business park lands
 - Promote intensification
- Focusing major office development on rapid transit routes
- Supporting retail development in preferred locations and forms
- Attracting business activity in key economic sectors
- Supporting "Main Street" revitalization and the integration of retail and services with other uses

NUMBER OF COMPANIES BY SECTOR	
▶ Information & Communication technologies (ICT)	728
▶ Life Sciences	101
▶ ICT/Life Sciences	93
▶ Finance/Insurance	335
▶ Information/Entertainment/Culture	456
▶ Professional Scientific /Technical services	963

Increase Travel Choices



The challenge for Markham over the next 20 years is to accelerate the transition from a primarily car dependent community, to one where travel includes other modes such as transit, cycling, walking and carpooling. With increasing travel choices, Markham residents and workers will have more opportunity to select the mode of transportation that best meets their needs.

The Markham Transportation Strategic Plan (MTSP) sets out a transportation vision for the future of Markham in relation to the Region of York and the Greater Toronto Area, and identifies key policy directions to achieve this vision. Key elements of this vision include:

- Supporting patterns of growth and land use that will ultimately require less travel for everyday activities and which encourage more travel by transit, cycling and walking
- Optimizing available transportation infrastructure to increase efficiency of moving people and goods
- Reducing environmental impacts of transportation
- Promoting liveable, active and healthy communities

Key Policy Directions

Key policy directions for the new Official Plan will include:

- Integrating land use and transportation planning
- Influencing the amount and pattern of travel through education, public policies and service improvements
- Pursuing a transit culture and placing priority on transit and active transportation modes
- Providing integrated cycling and walking networks
- Reviewing strategic improvements to the road network
- Managing the supply of parking
- Improving road safety
- Facilitating goods movement
- Phasing developments relative to transit delivery
- Supporting long-term transit funding



Build Sustainable Communities



Markham's new Official Plan will provide the policy framework to build sustainable, complete communities by:

- Intensifying and improving the mix of new development and directing it to designated centres and corridors which are well served and connected by rapid transit
- Maintaining the stability of existing residential neighbourhoods, heritage districts and business parks and improving pedestrian connectivity and transit accessibility
- Creating more compact and pedestrian friendly new communities with housing, employment and a full range of community services and amenities within each community

Council has begun to identify policy directions intended to contribute to making Markham a more sustainable community through:

- The types and patterns of land use we approve
- The supportive interrelationship between land use and modes of travel that we pursue
- The preservation and integration of natural and built heritage resources
- The way in which development and infrastructure are designed
- **Our focus on supporting Markham's economy and wise management of financial resources**

Key Policy Directions

Key policy directions for the new Official Plan will include:

Integrate Land Use and Transportation

- Integrating the different patterns of development and land use within existing and proposed Markham communities with transit to support more balanced mobility
- Improving connectivity by providing a public realm that is more conducive to transit, cycling and pedestrian use
- Adapting existing neighbourhoods and business parks to improve pedestrian connectivity to transit and provide more pedestrian and transit-oriented development in new communities well served by public transit

Healthy Economy

- Providing a healthy economy, attractive to businesses, by offering a variety of accommodation (land and buildings) and superior transit and road access

Build Sustainable Communities



Improve Housing Choices

- Providing an appropriate range of housing by type, tenure, and affordability to accommodate the needs of all residents and workers regardless of age, income level, ability, culture and family composition
- Increasing the share of apartments in new residential units to be added to the housing stock by 2031
- Diversifying the housing stock to accommodate an increasing number of non-family households and increasing opportunities for more affordable housing choices



Compatible Form and Function

- Ensuring new development is appropriate to the area context in which it occurs with the built form of development, its height and density, the mix of uses being compatible with the surrounding community form and function



Sustainable Communities

- Ensuring that communities provide for complete community design, sustainable transportation, open space and natural heritage, sustainable buildings and built heritage conservation, energy conservation and renewable technologies, water management and conservation, and waste and resource management



Appropriate Mix of Land Uses

- Locating an appropriate mix and highest density of land uses within walking distance of transit, with multi-storey buildings integrating sufficient retail and service activities, and community facilities to support the needs of residents, businesses and workers



Increase Live-Work Opportunities

- Improving the proportion of people who both live and work in Markham will improve the quality of life for Markham residents and workers by reducing traffic congestion/gridlock, travel time to and from work, and other health issues associated with poor air quality

Towards a Sustainable Community

Get Involved

Next Steps

Consultation with community groups, agencies,
First Nations and Metis, Town Departments

Report to Development Services Committee
(June 2011)

Further consultation to be scheduled when draft
Official Plan is prepared



Visit our website at www.markham.ca for more information on Markham's new Official Plan and other strategic initiatives related to Building Markham's Future Together

Be part of our circulation list

If you would like to be notified of future meetings, please contact Kitty Bavington of the Clerks Department by email to kbavington@markham.ca or call 905-477-7000, ext. 3695.

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Send us your comments and questions to officialplan@markham.ca

Key Links to senior government policies on growth management and planning:

Places to Grow— Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
www.placestogrow.ca

Greenbelt Plan
www.mah.gov.on.ca

Metrolinx Plan (The Big Move)
www.metrolinx.com

Region of York Official Plan
www.york.ca

Notes



Towards
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Sustainable



Community

