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POSITION ON STAFF REPORT OF MARCH 24, 2015 ON MONITORING POPULATION FORECASTS FOR THE CITY OF MARKHAM AND SELECTED AREAS

March 24, 2015

We are appreciative that Council continues to be interested in population forecasts and continues to request updates on our analysis that we did last spring to study population increases in Markham Centre and our Ward.

The staff report is a good start, but raises a number of questions and comments.

1. It cites that the City-wide population is 3.5% higher than forecast, which is more than 10,000 people. That seems like a significant number. Why is this happening? Where are these people going? Staff states they cannot conclude one way or the other if this high growth trend will continue. If it does, it definitely will need to be responded to. It illustrates the need for continued close monitoring.
2. Within Markham Centre, we prepared population forecasts for 2016, 2023 and 2031. We did not dispute the ultimate build out number of 41,000 population, which is in fact close to our rough estimate. But when we did a conservative estimate for 2023, we concluded that population growth between now and then will be much higher than expected. In their memo last year, staff essentially agreed, noting that Council had approved 1800 more units than contemplated in the 2009 Growth Strategy, which is the last time intermediate year forecasts were prepared. The present report **does not provide updated intermediate year forecasts**. We need these badly.
3. We also need updated forecasts on employment both City-wide and in Markham Centre.
4. The report talks about the importance of completing the Mobility Hub study to inform the Markham Centre population forecast, Secondary Plan and updated Transportation study. URA has participated in several workshops that the consultant has held on this study. But we understand that nothing has progressed since September, over 6 months ago. Why? When will this very important component get moving again?
5. It was interesting to see the projections for Langstaff Gateway, showing zero population growth. Development at Langstaff is dependent on completion of the Yonge Subway extension, a complex, expensive and unfunded project. There is a reasonable chance that this subway extension will be substantially delayed. A sensitivity analysis should be run on what might happen to the City and Markham Centre if this happens. Will we miss our growth targets? Will there be more expansion into the Whitebelt? More expansion at Markham Centre?

In conclusion, all the evidence is pointing to the fact that recent population growth in the City and in Markham Centre being higher than forecast. Will this continue – who knows? But since the consequences are so important, we need to keep close year-by-year monitoring and we need to press

for transportation investment. Within Markham Centre, we need road projects like Miller Ave, Yorktech extension, Verclaire and Sciberras Bridges and additional 407 crossings. And we need transit projects like the mobility hub study and municipal contributions to Smart Track and VIVA expansion.

We can't speak as definitively for the rest of the City, but again urge Council to focus on this topic and to continue to press for answers and transportation investment.