



**“YOUR VOICE MAKES
OUR VOICE STRONGER”**
<http://unionvilleratepayers.com>

24 November 2015
Mayor Frank Scarpitti and City Council
City of Markham
101 Town Centre Blvd.
Markham ON L3R 9W3

Dear Mr. Mayor and Council,

This letter is written to you on behalf of the residents of Unionville in response to the November 16 staff report to the Development Services Committee relative to the Main Street Unionville vision plan. We understand that the report and related motions were endorsed by the DSC.

We are simultaneously encouraged and disappointed by the report. We are encouraged by the staff recommendation and DSC endorsement of an advisory committee. Without an active – even activist – committee supported by staff, at this point we see no other means of pushing the vision for Unionville forward. The residents of Unionville remain very supportive of the plan and want to encourage its implementation in any way we can.

However we are disappointed by the inability of the Mayor and key property owners to come together on the financing of a development coordinator position. This reflects a real lack of vision among the property owners. While the establishment of the Advisory Committee is encouraging, the progress of the plan will be limited without a committed champion with appropriate resources of time and development expertise.

The URA therefore encourages the City to proceed with the hiring of a part-time coordinator on an initial one-year contract without property owner support. Though this approach is not ideal, it seems to be the only reasonable way forward without essentially abandoning the plan and writing off the quarter million dollars already invested.

And an abandonment of the plan amounts to abandoning the basic tenants of the Heritage Conservation District. In its current form Main Street is not commercially viable in the long term and doing nothing will allow it to sink further in what amounts to a slow death spiral. Over time there will be less and less to protect as buildings decay and inappropriate poorly capitalised businesses take over more and more of the commercial space. This will have a negative impact on commercial and residential property values, tourism income and property tax revenues.

The value of a potential development coordinator can be seen in recent events. The restoration and renovation of the Queen's Hotel was a perfect opportunity to kick-start the redevelopment of Main Street. We understand that the owner of the Hotel explored redevelopment of the rear portion of the building in a way that apparently would have been keeping with the vision for the west side of Main Street. Without a coordinator to assist in problem solving, facilitating, pushing, cajoling and leading, the project became too complex for the owner. We understand that they will be restoring the building pretty much as it was with little or no ground floor presence at the rear of the building. It is unlikely to interface appropriately with the residential and retail development included in the vision for the west side of the street.

Also the Stiver House has been vacant for years and has been for sale for months. A coordinator could assist in finding an appropriate buyer who shares the vision of the street and has the capital to make a significant contribution to getting the plan off the ground.

And please recall that, as was noted at the DSC meeting on March 24 of this year, the City, as a significant landowner, has a very big stake in the plan. We believe that it is in the City's interest to support the engagement of a coordinator to maximize the value of its holdings, as well as the value of property taxes generally. *The cost of a coordinator should be thought of as an investment not an expense.*

Mr. Mayor and Councillors, the residents of Unionville remain very supportive of the vision plan for the village. We are not prepared to see it die and we welcome any opportunity to work with the City and the property owners to bring it to life.

Best regards,

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President
Unionville Ratepayers Association