

November 7th Members' Meeting & Annual General Meeting



Our next members' meeting will be on Monday **November 7th, 2016 at 7:00 pm** at the **Pan Am Centre in Committee Room 2.**

We have invited Tanya Lewinberg, Public Realm Co-coordinator for Markham, to present the **Markham Public Realm Strategy and Park Renaissance.**

Both the regular members' meeting and Annual General Meeting will follow. We look forward to seeing you on Monday November 7th.

Public Meetings

Thursday November 3rd 2016 6:00 – 9:30 PM
Theme: North Markham Future Urban Area Conceptual Master Plan
Venue: Great Hall, Markham Civic Centre

Wednesday November 9th 2016 3:00 – 7:00 PM
Theme: Don Mills Channel Flood Reduction Environmental Assessment Study
Venue: Courtyard Marriott at 7095 Woodbine Ave.

Thursday November 17th 2016 6:30 – 9:00 PM
Theme: Transit Project Assessment Process
GO Rail Network Electrification;
Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion;
Lakeshore East - Don River Expansion
Venue: Cornell Community Centre at 3021 Bur Oak Ave

Proposed Constitution change for URA

At the May 2nd members' meeting the renaming of the URA to the Unionville Residents Association was approved. To avoid a lengthy legal process, the board has determined that the easiest way to achieve this change is to retain the corporate name - Unionville Ratepayers Association, but indicate in the constitution that the corporation will operate under the new name. Since this approach requires a constitutional change the following amendment will be tabled for a vote at the upcoming Annual General Meeting:

Current Preamble and Article I

The Unionville Ratepayers' Association was incorporated as a non-profit organization by Letters Patent issued by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario on July 3rd, 1974.

Article I Name: The name of this Association shall be the Unionville Ratepayers' Association.

Proposed Amended Preamble and Article I

The Unionville Ratepayers' Association was incorporated as a non-profit organization by Letters Patent issued by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario on July 3rd, 1974. Effective November 7, 2016, the corporation will operate under the name Unionville Residents' Association.

Article I Name: The name of this Association shall be the Unionville Ratepayers' Association, **but will operate under the name of Unionville Residents' Association.**



York Downs Golf Course Redevelopment

We are getting the first public inkling of the proposed York Downs redevelopment. A report to Markham's Development Services Committee on October 25 indicated that there will be about 1,760 residential units plus several medium density mixed use blocks – possibly stacked townhouses or midrise condos. A rough analysis suggests that the density and housing mix will be like the Upper Unionville redevelopment just east of Kennedy Road.

Phase 1 (the surplus land on Kennedy Rd) will be developed soon, with the remainder (where the golf holes are) to be developed in four years.

URA will continue to monitor this development closely.

Public Disclosure on Second Suite, Rooming Housing, Short Term Accommodation

As discussed in our October newsletter, a public meeting on this topic was held on October 11. URA made a deputation consistent with our formal submission – supporting licensed secondary suites as-of-right and supporting licensed rooming houses in intensification areas. We did not have a position on short-term accommodations (i.e. Airbnb).

In response to our query, staff clarified that a dwelling unit in a rooming house can have either zero or one of bathroom and cooking facilities (previous definition was ambiguous). We also suggested that an alternate definition of rooming houses, based on number of occupants rather than number of rooms, be considered.

Public opinion at the meeting was supportive of secondary suites, and mixed on rooming houses. Many of the public comments related to problems with Airbnb rentals of vacant houses and their use as party venues. Staff committed to undertake further study of this problem.

Numerous other comments referred to the absence of by-law enforcement (not enough by-law officers). This issue will be referred to the budget committee.

OMB Reform Update

The province has moved into the second phase of their review of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) and the URA is staying involved. In September we submitted a set of recommendations to the provincial government in light of their review of the powers and processes of the OMB (posted at www.unionvilleratepayers.com). The province has now issued a consultation document (Google: OMB Review) with background on the issues and a series of questions. We were very pleased to see that the questions seem to align very closely with the concerns expressed in our September submission; we intend to respond.

On October 18th a public meeting, sponsored by the province, was held in Newmarket to review the questions in the consultation document. Our Vice-Chair, Reid McAlpine, attended on behalf of the URA. The approximately 75 people in attendance were largely citizens and representatives of residents groups. Unfortunately, there was very little representation from the more heavily populated southern portion of York Region and Reid was the only person from Markham. There were a few professional planners, but no representatives of any significant developers or their industry association, BILD. Nor were any development lawyers in attendance. It was particularly worrisome to see that no Markham politicians attended. (The Mayor of Newmarket was there.) We can only assume that the municipalities, developers, etc. are consulting with (lobbying!) the province in private. As you might expect, the outcome of the evening was not entirely clear and it was only the first of several such sessions to be held across the province. Government staff and politicians will be challenged to discern clear directions from the discussions.

The URA will now be preparing our own direct response to the consultation document, based primarily on a reiteration of the positions in our September submission. We encourage you to read the document (Google: OMB Review) -- a relatively easy read -- and forward any comments to Reid (reid.mcalpine1@gmail.com) before November 15.

Soaring House Prices



Canada's Hottest Housing Markets "Unsustainable": Bank of Canada

House prices have soared in Vancouver and Toronto. Vancouver house prices increased by 30% in May 2016 and Toronto prices increased 25% in September over last year's prices. The average house price in Vancouver is \$1.5 million and in Toronto its \$1.2 million as compared to Canadian average of \$580,000.

Many theories for the prices increases have been suggested including: increased immigration, in-demand communities, low interest rates, land shortage and foreign investment.

The National Association of Realtors research and a Financial Times survey indicated that Chinese investors spent \$12.7B, or 33% total sales, in Vancouver and \$9B, or 14% of total sales in Toronto. This "gold-rush" atmosphere adds to the economy, but at the same time stirs anger in those shut out of the market.

In August 2016, British Columbia announced a 15% property transfer tax on foreign property investors. Thus, average house prices fell from \$1.75 million to \$1.5 million. To stem prospective home owner anger British Columbia plans to spend \$500 million on affordable housing.

The Federal Government also announced in October that foreign property buyer not in Canada at the time of the house purchase will not qualify as principle resident. Thus, 25% of the sales proceeds will be withheld until the seller submits owed taxes to Revenue Canada.

The Federal Government has also announced that any insured mortgage or where the down payment of less than 20% will be required to pass a payment stress test tax based on a 4.64% rate. Under old rules, a family earning \$100,000 and has a \$40,000 down payment can qualify for a \$665,000 mortgage. Under the new rules the qualified mortgage is \$505,000. Mortgage insurance will only be allowed for a principle residence and not one intended for rental or investment. Since household debt ratio has increased from 84% in 1990 to 165% in 2015, these changes will help to reduce the default risk in the event of interest rate increases

The Federal Government has also launched a public consultation on what it can do to help mitigate high house prices. The theme of the Canadian Housing issues discussion includes:

- Between 2000 and 2015, the average price of a Canadian home has risen more than 2.9 times and 4.1 times in Vancouver, Toronto & Montreal, faster than the growth in household income
- The ratio of household debt to disposable income has risen from 84% in 1990 to 165% in 2015
- 3.3 million Canadian households and 30% of households in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver spent 30% or more their income on housing
- 1.6 million Canadian households can't afford a home in their community that is in good condition and large enough for their family.
- 31% or 4 million Canadians renting home and 61% of renters spend more than 50% their income on renting with 557,435 or 13.7% of renters living in subsidized housing.
- 1/3 of seniors live in social housing with 400,000 seniors struggling with housing affordability
- In 2015 there were 1.9 million purpose built rental units. Half were built before 1980. The rental vacancy rate in Toronto and Vancouver are 0.8% and 1.6% respectively
- The federal government has 550,000 social housing units. Since most were built between 1940 and 1990 extensive renovation and modernization is required

To provide more affordable housing, the federal government has also done the following:

- CMHC invests \$1.7 billion each year through existing long-term social housing agreements
- The federal government invested \$238 million per year on affordable housing between 2011-19 and plans to double that amount to \$504 million over next 2 years
- The federal government plans to invest \$2.5 billion over next 5 years to provide low-cost loans to housing developers for the construction of new affordable rental housing projects
- The federal government invested \$573.9 million, over next two years, in repairs and energy efficiency improvement to existing social housing projects
- Identifying suitable government surplus properties or lands for affordable housing development

For more Federal perspectives on Canadian housing issue, please visit <https://www.letstalkhousing.ca/>

Public Realm – Parks Renaissance



City of Markham parks and open spaces are integral to defining the physical and social fabric of our city - contributing to overall livability, encouraging investment and providing much needed respite from the built-up urban environment. The parks, open spaces and natural areas define the foundation of the city's spatial organization and overall natural heritage system. These spaces create opportunities for a wide variety of recreation facilities, programs and events that encourage active living, provide enrichment and build a strong sense of community.

As a community of communities, with its origins dating to the late 1700s, Markham's urban areas exhibit different forms, growth rates, and socio-demographic characteristics. Consequently, park open space areas are limited in some older communities and the associated facility infrastructure is aging and of varied conditions. Markham has experienced tremendous population growth and is one of Canada's most culturally diverse municipalities. Park and open spaces in recently developed areas, offer modern development and facility provision that offer exciting and creative spaces with a range of amenities that do not exist in the older parks and open spaces. As Markham continues to grow the demands and pressure on parks and open space facilities will continue to increase.

Markham's parks and open spaces are an integral part of the broader public realm. In 2015 the City completed Shared Places, Our Spaces: Markham's Public Realm Strategy (2015). The strategy engaged City staff, Council, residents and community stakeholders in articulating a vision and in identifying opportunities to enhance, improve and raise awareness of Markham's public spaces. The outcome is a series of recommendations for achieving successful public spaces that are well planned and designed and where heritage, culture and diversity can be celebrated.

The Parks Renaissance Strategy builds on the work completed for Shared Places, Our Spaces with a focus on the renewal of parks in older communities. As elements of the public realm, these parks will be developed to facilitate new and different activities to the experiences currently offered. Updating the parks in the mature communities in Markham will bring them more in line to what is being offered in the new communities in Markham where the latest in park design is being offered.

Please get in touch with us! The Public Realm page of our website has a link to a suggestion page, where residents can email ideas for Public Realm Park Renaissance improvements that are needed in the City.

What is the URA?

A non-partisan association of the residents of Unionville

- ✓ Boundaries: Warden Ave. to McCowan Rd. and Sixteenth Ave. to Hwy 407
- ✓ Founded in 1974 to protect the interests of the community
- ✓ Registered with the Province of Ontario and the City of Markham

What does URA do?

- ✓ Stays current on events, activities and issues in Unionville
- ✓ Keeps our members informed through regular email broadcasts and monthly meetings with guest speakers on relevant topics
- ✓ Ensures that residents' views are known and communicated to local, regional and provincial government officials
- ✓ Maintains a website that contains information on active issues
- ✓ Organizes special events, such as candidates' meetings

Join Us!!

Together Our Voice
Is Stronger

Membership information can found at:

<http://www.unionvilleratepayers.com/membership.html>