



Unionville Residents Association



FEBRUARY 2017

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*Mayor Frank Scarpitti
Monday Feb 6th, @ 7PM
Pan Am Center Room 2*

Renew your Membership with the URA!

For over 40 years, the Unionville Residents' Association (URA) has been led by fellow neighbours dedicated to improving our community through public education, engagement, and representation.

The URA holds monthly meetings and we encourage you, your family, and friends to join us. Learn about what's happening in Unionville, get to know your neighbours, and become involved.

Stay part of the conversation and renew your membership with us! Membership provides you the opportunity to vote on topics at meetings and to be eligible to participate on the URA Board and committees.

For more information on how to renew your membership, visit our website at unionvilleratepayers.com or in ask us in person at our monthly meetings.

Meeting with Mayor Frank Scarpitti

Our next members' meeting will be on Monday February 6th, 2017 at 7:00 pm at the Pan Am Centre in Committee Room 2. We have invited Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti to provide us an update on the following topics

- State of Markham
- Status of Unionville Mobility Hub & York University
- Markham Affordable Housing Strategy
- Improving Unionville Main Street
- Further Intensification
- Markham on OMB reform
- Enforcing Sign & Tree Preservation By-laws

We look forward to seeing you on Monday, February 6th, 2017.

Strengthening Markham's Tree Preservation By-Law

URA is asking the City to accelerate their review of the tree preservation bylaw, to prevent further illegal tree cutting and improve tree preservation at new developments

The issue of tree preservation at redevelopment sites has concerned the URA for quite a while. In 2015, as fallout from our learnings at Varley Plaza redevelopment, we sent a letter to the City identifying ways the Tree Preservation Bylaw should be strengthened.

Recently, the issue has flared up again, with the illegal cutting of 3 large trees at 47/51 Gainsville without a permit. Two of these trees were owned by the City and were located on City land. One of these trees was a large maple valued at \$75,000. The perpetrators have been charged with offences under the Bylaw. URA has been assisting local residents as they move forward.

URA is asking the City to accelerate their review of this Bylaw, to prevent further illegal tree cutting and improve tree preservation at new developments, such as Unionville Home Society, York Downs Golf Club and Hughes/Briarwood Farms.

A petition has been initiated by the local residents expressing outrage and urging prompt review of the Bylaw. The URA directors support this petition and urge members to sign it by using the link [here](#).

Downzoning at 3940 Highway 7 Approved

212413 Ontario, the owner of this development on the north side of Highway 7, second property west of Village Parkway, has received approval from Markham and York Region to downzone their approved 209-unit 8-story condo building fronting on Highway 7 to a 29-unit townhouse complex. The approvals came despite staff opposition.

URA had previously opposed this downzoning unless the extra 180 units were transferred to another location on a major transit corridor or regional growth centre. This condition was easily met when Times Development applied to increase their number of units on the south side of Highway 7 from 4,500 to 6,100 units, an increase of 1,600 units.



There will be an increase of 1,600 units on the south side of Highway 7.

Contact Information info@unionvilleratepayers.com

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

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GO Transit Update

URA representatives recently met with Metrolinx to get a status report on current and upcoming GO Transit projects. Here is a summary:

Service Increases:

Two extra trains were added between Lincolnville and Union Station in January. There are now 17 trains per weekday (85 per week) between Unionville and Union. In 4 years, this number will be 200+ per week. We have requested a year-by-year service ramp up plan.



Unionville Go Station

Construction at Unionville Station:

Tenders will be awarded this summer to add two extra tracks, tunnels, elevators, stairs, new platforms, canopies and 300 new parking spots. Construction will occur between 2017 and 2019.

MOBILITY HUB OBJECTIVES

SEAMLESS MOBILITY

- 1** Seamless integration of modes at the rapid transit station.
- 2** Safe and efficient movement of people with high levels of pedestrian priority.
- 3** A well-designed transit station for a high quality user experience.
- 4** Strategic parking management.

PLACEMAKING

- 5** A vibrant, mixed-use environment with higher land use intensity.
- 6** An attractive public realm.
- 7** A minimized ecological footprint.

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

- 8** Flexible planning to accommodate growth and change.
- 9** Effective partnerships and incentives for increased public and private investment.

From Metrolinx

Electrification Construction:

Electrification is planned all the way to Lincolnville and will involve constructing overhead wiring, support poles and noise walls. Considerable tree removal is likely. Metrolinx will be holding public consultations prior to the work, which is expected to start in 2020.

Mobility Hub Study:

As described in our Markham Centre Update, November 25, 2016, this study is being led by Metrolinx. The Phase One study is expected to be complete in the summer of 2017.

Highway 7 Grade Separation:

This crossing is on the Metrolinx “feasibility study” list for potential grade separation. We have provided further information on the negative community impacts of grade separation at this location, and asked for further details of the study.

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Toronto Housing Market

According to a study conducted on recent housing unaffordability by middle income holders, Vancouver was ranked number 3 after Hong Kong and Sydney, while Toronto ranked number 13 for cities with a population over 1 million people. The rating is based on the median house price divided by the median income of the city, to arrive at a ratio referred to as multiple median.

Rank	Cities	Median House Price	Median Salary	Multiple Median
1	Hong Kong	\$5,422,000	\$300,000	18.1
2	Sydney	\$1,077,000	\$88,000	12.2
3	Vancouver	\$830,100	\$70,500	11.8
:				
13	Toronto	\$618,000	\$79,900	7.7

The report suggests the population increase and urban containment policies such as place to grow and restrictive greenbelt have gradually made housing less affordable in Toronto and neighbouring cities. It also suggests longer building permit issuance may choke the housing supply driving price upwards. For more detail, please refer to this [link](#).



In the meantime, Donald Trump’s plan to spend a big money on infrastructure may cause inflation which could result in investor dumping bonds, driving interest rate to increase. China has also tightened scrutiny for the Chinese who are looking to convert currency to invest in foreign homes and other investments. According to Globe and Mail article titled “New Chinese rule threaten tides of foreign buyer in Canada”, authorities in China are taking new steps to bar individuals from putting their cash into overseas markets to buy homes and other investments. This will be a change with implications for cities such as Vancouver and Toronto where Chinese buyers had contributed to frenzied property trading. From a financial market observer, since a large pool of money from China is already in the Canadian Market, the new rule will not be reflected in the market immediately however it will gradually take effect for the years to come. Will this transcribe to cooling down the heated Toronto housing markets?

Sidewalk Infill

The sidewalk infill refers to the process of installing sidewalks where only one or none currently exist. City staff presented a report to Development Services Committee on January 23 outlining a work plan to develop a new City wide policy for approval by Council prior to the summer recess. The current policy dates from 1997 and the concern is that some neighbourhoods developed prior, do not have sidewalks consistent with the policy. The presentation can be downloaded [here](#).

The work plan includes development of a sidewalk inventory by Ward noting any deficiencies; consultation with Ward Councillors and ratepayer associations; refining the criteria for implementation and a 5 years capital program. Some noted benefits include greater walkability, overall safety, and accessibility.



Some noted benefits of the sidewalk infill include a greater walkability, overall safety and accessibility.



Some residents however, may feel they prefer their existing sidewalk-less streetscapes and don't want any parking reduction on their driveways which may have a negative impact on property value. The impact on existing streets, trees and communication company equipment and ongoing winter maintenance will need to be assessed and costed to understand future implications.

The feedback from the Committee was that the plan should focus on specific gaps (access to schools, transit etc.) and with respect to older neighbourhoods. Going forward there could also be a concern regarding city liability. The URA will be involved in the discussions and if there is any feedback please email us at president@unionvilleratepayers.com with your comments.

By : Michael Gannon

Housing Affordability

The URA has identified housing affordability as a critical issue in Markham and York Region, as have all levels of government. We have established a goal to educate our members and the wider community about what can be done to address the problem.

The average house price in Markham requires a family income over \$150,000. But the average family income in Markham is just \$100,000.

Perhaps a better term for "affordable housing", commonly used in Canada, is the British term, "Key Worker Housing". That term is illustrated by the question "Where do the cleaners at Markham-Stouffville Hospital live?" 40% of York Region residents are classed as "working poor". The average house price in Markham requires a family income over \$150,000. But the average family income in Markham is just \$100,000. As Markham works to attract new employers one of their frequent questions is, "Where can my employees afford to live in Markham?" And don't forget the York University students soon to arrive in our community. The economic and social health of Markham depends on the availability of a full range of housing for all people.

At our last members meeting we hosted a presentation by Rick Farrell, General Manager, Housing, Community and Health Services for York Region. Rick manages the Region's social housing stock. But he made it clear that social housing is only one small part of the solution to affordable housing. Mayor Scarpitti will be presenting at our February 6 meeting. We have asked him to briefly address the issue (among several other concerns).

A committee of the URA board is now in the early stages of planning a public forum on the topic of housing affordability. In the lead up to that event we are reaching out to various stakeholders and experts in the issue -- academics, politicians, developers, and municipal staff. Watch this space for more information on this important topic for Markham and Ward 3 (Unionville).



Affordable housing is a critical issue in Markham and York Region.