

URA

Unionville Residents Association



MARCH 2017

Mayor Scarpitti speaks to large URA Audience

Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti addressed a large crowd of URA members, community citizens and media at our February 6 meeting at the Markham Pan Am Centre.

Inside This Issue

- 1 Mayor Scarpitti Speaks
- 1 York Downs
- 2 Update on Gainesville
- 3 "Foreign Buyer's Tax"
- 4 Housing Affordability

In an entertaining and informative session, he responded to about 30 questions on a wide range of topics including local development initiatives, York University, Main Street revitalization, intensification, OMB reform, tree preservation, illegal signs, council procedures, GO train whistles, snow plowing, road widening and Yonge Subway extension.

Perhaps the area of most interest was the numerous questions and comments on housing affordability. A full write-up of questions and the Mayor's responses can be found on our [website](#).



Patrick O'Hanlan

Monday Mar 6th, @ 7PM

Pan Am Center Room 2

York Downs GC Redevelopment

Patrick O'Hanlan, president of Kylemore Communities, one of the developers of the York Downs golf course site, will be our guest at the next URA meeting on March 6. He will be presenting plans for the site and you will have a chance to ask questions.

Work has already begun at the east end of the York Downs property, an area not used for golf. The golf course itself is slated to be redeveloped in about 4 years, and final plans for it are progressing. The site presents several challenges, particularly with regard to environmental protection and traffic management. We look forward to discussing these and other issues with Mr. O'Hanlan.

Update on 47/51 Gainesville

These “minor variances” are significant and vary from 30% to 12.5% difference from the requirements of the By-laws

The owner of the property, Jayling Wu, appeared in Richmond Hill Provincial Court on February 9th, to face charges of felling trees without permits. An adjournment was requested and granted, to consult counsel. The case was adjourned until March 8th which was postponed and has not been rescheduled yet which means that the variances may change.

In the meantime, the owner has applied to the Committee of Adjustment (CofA) for no less than five “minor variances”.

They are as follows:

- (a) maximum lot coverage of 41.31% - By-law permits 33.33%,
- (b) minimum front yard set-back of 20.01 feet - By-law requires 27 feet,
- (c) maximum building height of 32 feet 6 inches - By-law permits 25 feet,
- (d) minimum side yard set-back of 4 feet 8 inches - By-law requires 6 feet and
- (e) minimum east side set-back of 3 feet 6 inches - By-law permits 4 feet.



These “minor variances” are significant and vary from 30% to 12.5% difference from the requirements of the By-laws.

The hearing was scheduled at the CofA on February 22nd, but was deferred shortly before the meeting, in order for the applicant to provide City staff with additional material. The rescheduled date for the hearing is March 9th.

Public comment to the CofA in writing, e-mail etc., is encouraged and the appearance of members of the public at the hearing is particularly powerful. The URA position is to oppose the application for “minor variances” or at the very least, to request a deferral of any CofA decision until after the

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“Foreign Buyer’s Tax”

A motion was brought to Council on February 13th to request the Province to introduce a “Foreign Buyer’s Tax”, similar to that introduced recently in British Columbia. The motion was introduced by Karen Rea, seconded by Alan Ho. A recent report by the Toronto Real Estate Board (TREB) noted that resale house prices in the greater GTA had risen by 22% and noted that foreign buyers made up 4.9% of the purchasers.

A number of residents and a Ratepayers Association made presentations; all of whom supported the motion. Data was shown which indicated the “cooling off” of the real estate market in Vancouver in the four months since the tax was introduced. The URA also presented and supported the motion in principle, but asked Council to conduct research into the role of the foreign based buyer in the resale housing market. Most Councillors spoke in opposition to the motion, some at length and getting way off topic.

Councillor Li was particularly exercised and demanded that the Chinese community should not be targeted for a small (4.9% of GTA sales) issue. The Council understood that the Province of Ontario would have to introduce such a “Foreign Buyers Tax”, but Markham was not going to be the lead municipality to take it to the Province. It was stated that should the Province see this as a problem, then they would deal with it! The Motion was eventually defeated 8-4, with only Councillors Rea, Ho, Burke and Kanapathi in favour.

However, at the last URA meeting, with the Mayor present as a guest speaker, a local real estate agent, noted that in Markham the detached home prices are up almost 26% in the last twelve months. He also noted that a significant part of his business (much higher than the 4.9% quoted by TREB) was to foreign buyers and stated that between 60 and 80% of homes being purchased are converted to a rental unit within days of being closed. URA recognize this is an on-going issue for local residents

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF WEALTHY FOREIGN BUYERS ON THE REAL ESTATE MARKET



MARCH 2017

Housing Affordability

On May 6 the URA, with the co-sponsorship of Deputy Mayor Jack Heath, will host a public forum on housing affordability in Markham and York Region. Plans are in motion now to bring together academic experts, representatives of the home building and rental housing industries, government experts and politicians, to help us define the issue and to present some solutions. We have discovered already in our conversations with these groups how complex the issue is. It is clear that there is plenty of discussion, but insufficient action. We welcome all members of the public to join us on the morning of May 6th at the Markham Civic Centre to help get the ball rolling toward actions that will provide more affordable housing options for everyone in Markham.



Housing Affordability is a critical issue in Markham and York Region.

MARCH 2017

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