

Living in Markham

The Real Estate Market Watch

Spring 2015

Progress Update: Checking In on the City of Markham's Designated Development Hotspots

Upon its public release in September of 2012, it was clear that the City of Markham's Official Plan was a ground-breaking document – one that would define a new set of objectives for the rapidly-growing municipality, while also pointing Markham's development practices towards a new, more forward-looking direction.

Taking into consideration a broad range of factors that included sustainability, transportation, and environmental impact, the Official Plan's primary goal was to set out a concrete roadmap for accommodating the growth of Markham's population. After all, at the time that the Plan was released, the city was projected to take in 422,000 new residents by the year 2031.

In order to continue preserving the City of Markham's environmentally significant green spaces (many of which were earmarked for preservation under the "Greenway System"), the municipal government and city staff opted to embrace a relatively modern style of development. Among adherents of the planning philosophy referred to as intensification – which the city explicitly cited within the pages of the Official Plan – several key principles are implemented in order to promote sustainable growth:

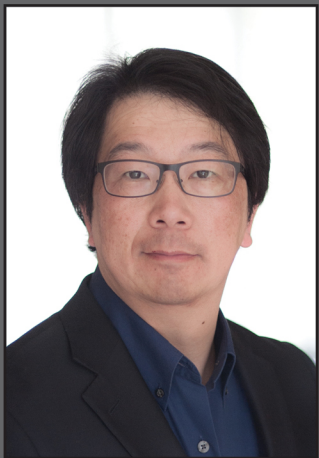
- Promoting high-potential development hubs – particularly those located along major transit networks – as viable sites for mid- and high-rise development.
- Ensuring that community plans for key areas embrace mixed use – rather than solely residential – zoning.
- Equipping designated development hubs with access to various means of transportation, including pedestrian and cycling routes, as well as easily-accessible connections to rapid transit systems (such as York Region's Viva Rapidway).

Keys and Corridors: A Look at The City of Markham's Hubs for High-Density Development

As part of laying out a plan for intensifying the city, the Official Plan for Markham identified two tiers of locational hubs that could be considered prime areas for mid- or high-rise, mixed-use development over the two decades that followed.

Regional Centres

This top-level designation includes only key areas designated for "the highest concentration and greatest mix and intensity of uses" – including both mid- and high-rise construction projects. Only two specific areas were earmarked as such within the Official Plan – so it's worth checking in to see



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how far they have come in the two years since.

Markham Centre

Located south of Highway 7 between Warden Avenue and Kennedy Road, Markham Centre has been built up considerably over the course of the past half-decade – thanks in no small part to the mixed-height residential offerings of Remington Group’s sprawling Downtown Markham residential community.

Located within close proximity to two area schools regarded highly for their specialty programs (Unionville High School and Bill Crothers Secondary School), Markham Centre also had the distinction of being one of York Region’s first communities to experi-

ence Viva/YRT’s bus-only Rapidway system – which passes through via Enterprise Drive. For those whose commute takes them beyond York Region, the Unionville GO station – offering both train and bus service – is also just around the corner.

One of the development’s newest major amenities – a multi-purpose athletic centre complete with field house, triple gymnasium, and Olympic-sized pool – will host international sports action this summer as it becomes temporarily rebranded the Atos Markham Pan Am / Parapan Centre. The facility officially opened for business in November 2014, and has become an indispensable resource for the many families who already call the neighbourhood home.



Langstaff Gateway Development

Langstaff Gateway

Stretching east from the GO network’s Langstaff station, both immediately north (Richmond Hill) and south (Markham) of Highway 407, the area dubbed “Langstaff Gateway” was earmarked as a site for major high-rise development – both residential and commercial – by the governments of both municipalities.

The master plan for Langstaff Gateway’s southern component, originally developed in 2009 by California-based planning firm Calthorpe Associates, received secondary approval from the City of Markham in June of 2011.

Key Development Areas

Not to be confused with the neighbourhood focal points designated as “local centres” – which under the Official Plan include familiar names like Cathedraltown, Thornhill Centre, and Milliken Centre – Key Development Areas (KDAs) are areas situated along major transit routes (i.e. Highway 7, Yonge Street) with the potential for intensive residential and/or commercial development.

• Commerce Valley / Galleria, a retail hub located southwest of where Highway 7 meets Leslie Street, is already well-known for retail and dining destinations like Commerce Gate and the Galleria Shoppes. In addition to modern commercial facilities hosting major players such as TD, the area is

now home to both mid- and low-rise developments on busy residential streets such as Times Avenue.

• While the Markville area – broadly known for its eponymous shopping centre – has not been the site of much intensive development since 2012, the area’s attractive low-rise offerings are a perennial real estate favourite. The family-friendly neighbourhood offers walking access to Centennial GO Station and community centre, VIVA express bus transit, and Markville Secondary School.

• Cornell, a now-enormous residential development east of 9th Line that now sprawls from Highway 7 all the way up to 16th Avenue, has recently continued to grow while respecting its original principles of European-style design. “Grand Cornell Brownstones,” Lindvest’s newest contribution to the area, has begun registration for a second phase of homes immediately south of Highway 7.

Note: This article was composed largely with information obtained from the City of Markham’s 2012 document entitled Your Guide to the City of Markham Official Plan. The document is publicly available, in .PDF format, at <http://www.markham.com>

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