

Coming Spring 2022: “Slow Down” Lawn Signs

Further to my Fall 2021 / Winter 2022 newsletter, I am making available a **Ward 1 “Slow Down” lawn sign** to road-safety-conscious residents. The demand for these free signs has been high so to avoid disappointment please let Lauren and me know if you’d like one as soon as possible by completing the form on markhamward1.ca. We will then arrange delivery.

In the meantime, **please slow down and watch out for children and other road users**. Together, we can help avoid a tragedy.



Ward 1 Slow Down lawn sign

Markham Firefighter Memorial

I was pleased to join my Council colleagues last year at a ceremony to unveil a memorial honouring Markham firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Located at Markham Veterans Square and Cenotaph at 6031 Highway 7 East, it is the only memorial of its kind in York Region. We are grateful for the men and women of Markham Fire & Emergency Services and thank them for their service.



Firefighter Memorial Ceremony



Around the Ward in 80...Words

Updates on previous Ward 1 News items...

- Greenpark Development Proposal for 10 Royal Orchard Blvd.**
 The application has been revised to include 4 towers ranging between 27 and 50 storeys, 1668 units and 2045 below ground parking spaces.
- Shouldice Hospital Lands at 7750 Bayview Avenue**
 At time of writing, lengthy discussions between Liberty Development, Mayor Scarpitti, me, and city Planning staff continue.
- Alectra Electric Vehicle Charging Partnership**
 There are now four EV charging stations at the Thornhill Community Centre, near the Seniors Centre.

Transit Oriented Communities

In September 2021 the provincial government designated the area surrounding both the Bridge (in Markham’s Langstaff Gateway) and High-Tech (in Richmond Hill Centre) subway stations along the Yonge North Subway Extension as “Transit Oriented Communities.”

TOCs, by definition, are mixed-use areas that include high density residential and commercial buildings. The intent is to build dense communities around new transit and subway stations.

In early December, with no prior consultation with members of municipal councils, Infrastructure Ontario (an agency of the provincial government) unveiled its plans for the Bridge and High-Tech TOCs.

The IO plan ignores the established Secondary Plans for this area and instead proposes 67 condominium towers, 40 at 60 storeys or more and 11 at 80 storeys. If implemented, it **will make this area the second densest place on earth**, just behind the Dharavi slums of Mumbai made famous by the 2008 film *Slumdog Millionaire*.

In January, Markham Council followed my lead by voting unanimously to reject the IO proposal and requested the government immediately withdraw its plan.

At time of writing community opposition is growing. I encourage you to **visit the website abettergta.com** as well as read Donovan Vincent’s February 20 article in the Toronto Star for more information.



SPRING / SUMMER 2022

WARD 1 NEWS



UPDATE FROM KEITH IRISH, YOUR MARKHAM WARD 1 COUNCILLOR

Dear Residents,
“May you live in interesting times.”

In a 1966 speech in Cape Town, South Africa, Senator Robert Kennedy said: “Like it or not we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also more open to the creative energy of people than any other time in history.” Those that lived through the Sixties or studied this chapter in history, can attest to how truly interesting and disruptive they were.

However, nowadays the expression “may you live in interesting times” is almost always used ironically, with the implication that “uninteresting times” of peace, tranquillity and predictability are somehow better and more enjoyable than ones fraught with challenge.

These past few years have proven to be particularly challenging as we confront the quintuple threats of the pandemic, economic uncertainty, civil unrest, climate change and now geopolitical conflict.

Fortunately, the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties is something humans are rather good at. Resilience can manifest itself in different ways.

For me, I’ve seen our Thornhill community come together in ways not seen I’m sure since Hurricane Hazel struck our small village in 1954. People are looking out for each other more than ever, lending a helping hand and being more considerate.

While it is likely true things will never be quite the same again, the question remains: will they be better?

That, I believe, depends on each of us. Nothing changes painlessly. The important thing too is that we not just remember past crises, but also that we ultimately overcame them and learned their lessons. People, like ships, were not made for safe harbours.

While our neighbours to the south praise life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, our constitution talks about “peace, order, and good government.” This current tumult cannot and will not continue indefinitely. Each of us, together and separately in our own way, can inspire courage and confidence while working toward the change we want to see in our neighbourhoods, our community, city, province and nation.

The provincial election on June 2 and the municipal election on October 24 are each an opportunity to do just that. I ask that you follow both elections closely, educate yourself on the issues, and most especially vote. Engaged citizens working together can accomplish extraordinary things.

In the meantime, we can take solace in the words of the poem “Keep Going” by Edgar Guest:

“When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
 When the road you’re trudging seems all up hill,
 When the funds are low and the debts are high,
 And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
 When care is pressing you down a bit,
 Rest if you must—but don’t you quit.

Success is failure turned inside out—
 The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
 And you never can tell how close you are,
 It may be near when it seems afar;
 So stick to the fight when you’re hardest hit—
 It’s when things seem worst that you mustn’t quit.”

Words comfort the soul. Knowledge nourishes the mind.

If you have an issue of concern, please contact me at kirish@markham.ca / **905-948-5101** or my Executive Assistant Lauren Patton at lpatt@markham.ca / **905-415-7512**.

Note: The city’s “Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy” prohibits members of Council from distributing newsletters (printed and/or electronic) and from hosting community information meetings during the municipal election period, May 1 to October 24, 2022.

New Collection Method

Blue box recyclables and green bin organics are collected on your regular collection day, but now by different trucks at different times. More information at Markham.ca/CurbsideCollection



This newsletter is distributed using Canada Post walks; a small number of Ward 8 residents may also receive this.



Contact Centre

If you have an issue regarding municipal services, programs and general inquiries (by-law complaints, garbage pick-up, graffiti, illegal dumping, property standards, park maintenance) please contact the city at **905-477-5530** or customerservice@markham.ca.

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Keeping you Informed & Connected: MarkhamWard1.ca

This website, www.markhamward1.ca, brings Ward 1 Thornhill residents a wealth of local information and news. Visit often and keep up-to-date!



Proposed New Development: 16 Kirk Drive

I'm sometimes asked, "why is Markham Council even considering this development proposal?" Close readers of my newsletters will know by now that the Provincial Planning Act permits owners of land to entertain any changes, regardless of current zoning, by submitting an amendment to the Official Plan and/or a Zoning By-law amendment application.

All municipalities, by law, must consider them.

And, while we usually think of development applications in terms of the number of tall buildings and total units being proposed, the city has received a proposal for what is now a single-family home on a 0.5-hectare (0.37 acre) lot, located at 16 Kirk Drive, to be replaced by 8, three-storey townhouses.

I have met with neighbouring residents on several occasions as well as the developer, and a Statutory Public Meeting was held on November 16, 2021. Based on feedback from the community and me I understand the developer is making some changes to their application that include reducing the height of what they have proposed, the overall building envelope and the number of units. More information will be shared as it becomes available.



16 Kirk Drive

Update: Jesus the King Melkite Catholic Church

I met last year with members of the Board of Jesus the King Melkite Catholic Church, located at 1 Lyndhurst Drive, to discuss their redevelopment plans. Those plans include demolition of the existing church and constructing a new one in the Byzantine style of architecture while also doubling on-site parking to dramatically reduce the need for on-street parking during Sunday church services.

Those that live in the neighbourhood or drive Leslie Street north of John Street know that the church suffered a devastating fire in 2016 and has been unusable.

At time of writing, the church leadership has submitted a Site Plan Control application **but not all plans required for a complete redevelopment application**. Provided they do so eventually, there will then be opportunities for Ward 1 residents to comment on what is being proposed.



Rendering of the proposed new church

160 Dudley Avenue

The site of the former St. Luke Catholic Elementary School, circa 1955, at 160 Dudley Avenue was declared surplus by the school board and purchased by the City of Markham for \$5.355M in 2013. After a period of public consultation, it was then leased to a third-party with capital investment conditions.

That arrangement ended early, by mutual consent, in December 2020. Since then a portion of the building has remained occupied by two tenants offering programs for the community.

The purchase of this 1858 m² (20,000 ft²) building on 1.04-hectares (2.564 acres) of land was a very good investment for Markham residents and I applaud my predecessor and the previous Council for making it.

In addition to being the Ward Councillor I also chair the city's Land, Building and Parks Committee where recommendations to Council about city-owned property are made. From my earliest days in office, especially after being briefed by the Fire Chief, I have had concerns about emergency services response times in this part of Thornhill.

It is for this reason that I am especially pleased to announce that a portion of the building, with some modifications, will eventually be the proud **home to a Markham Fire and Emergency services crew and truck**. This innovative service model easily (and affordably) extends the reach of the fire department to this part of Thornhill and will reduce emergency response times. It will be the first of its kind in Markham.

Keeping Markham Beautiful

Markham By-law 2017-27 stipulates that the grass on your private property and on the boulevard at the front and/or side of your home must be cut and maintained to 15 centimetres (6 inches) or lower. Hedges and bushes must be kept from being overgrown, the exterior of homes in good repair, painted and maintained, and garbage and recycling containers placed for pick-up no earlier than 7:00 p.m. the day prior to collection.

If you see a property in chronic violation of the By-law, please report it to the city's Customer Service team at **905-477-5530** or **customerservice@markham.ca**. Those that do not comply are likely to receive a visit from a By-law Enforcement Officer. A minimum fee of \$475 may be charged if the city is forced to cut your grass.

Update: Thornhill Square Shopping Centre Redevelopment

The city is now in receipt of **revised Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications**, submitted by the Goldberg Group on behalf of Hazelview Investments ("Hazelview"), for the 3.13 hectares (7.75 acres) of what is currently the Thornhill Square Shopping Centre at 288, 290, 292, 294, 296, 298 and 300 John Street.

The revised application proposes:

- The development of 615 residential (a mix of purchased and market-based rental) apartment units shared between 3 towers (12, 17 and 19 storeys) and one 7 storey building
- Site Density of 2.3 Floor Space Index (FSI)*
- Total Gross Floor Area for Residential uses is 50,725 m² (546,000 ft²), and
- Total Proposed Gross Floor Area for Retail, Office and Commercial uses is 12,728 m² (137,000 ft²)
- A total of 1,016 below ground parking spaces, located within one parking level, and 130 surface parking spaces
- A 0.69 hectare (1.7 acre) public park fronting John Street
- The existing heritage building (Santorini restaurant) to remain

We are at the very beginning of a lengthy planning process and far from making a decision on this application. There will be opportunities for all

Ward 1 residents to comment on what is being proposed. Details to follow when available.

**The Floor Space Index (FSI) calculation is derived from the total floor area of the buildings divided by the area of the property. It is an indicator of density.*

More information is available on **markhamward1.ca**.

Proposed New Development: 2300 John Street (Bishops Cross Plaza)

The city is now in receipt of applications to amend both the Official Plan and Zoning By-law, submitted by Weston Consulting on behalf of Primont Homes (Leslie/John) Inc., to permit the redevelopment of the plaza at 2300 John Street in Thornhill into a mixed-use high-rise development consisting of:

- 593 residential apartment units shared between two residential towers of 17 and 28 storeys
- A 2-storey podium facing Leslie Street and 10 storey podium facing John Street
- Site Density of 4.45 Floor Space Index (FSI)*
- A total proposed Gross Floor Area for all uses of 50,413 m² (542,636 ft²)
- A total proposed Gross Floor Area for retail, office and commercial uses of 1,284 m² (13,823 ft²)
- A total of 861 parking spaces (839 parking spaces underground, 22 spaces at grade)

We are at the very beginning of a lengthy planning process and far from making a decision on this application. There will be opportunities for all Ward 1 residents to comment on what is being proposed at a future Statutory Public Meeting and a Community Information Meeting hosted by me. Dates for both are still to be determined.

**The Floor Space Index (FSI) calculation is derived from the total floor area of the buildings divided by the area of the property. It is an indicator of density.*

More information is available on **markhamward1.ca**.

Markham Approves 1.95% Property Tax Rate Increase

On December 14, 2021, Markham Council approved the city's 2022 \$533.7M budget with a 1.95 per cent property tax rate increase.

The budget supports the continued delivery of critical city services while making key capital investments in

facilities, infrastructure and amenities that support Markham's strategic goals. It also supports a prudent and measured approach to re-opening and recovery.

The property tax rate increase is below the rate of inflation and will mean an increase of approximately \$25 in property taxes for the average residential household in Markham.

More information about the budget can be found at: **markham.ca/budget**

New Dog Park in Paddock Park

I am pleased to share news that the city's Budget Committee, of which I am a member, approved my \$370K request for construction of an off-leash dog park within Paddock Park located at 105 Simonston Blvd.

And yes, you read that amount correctly. A large part of the cost is to ensure the park complies with the province's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act so it can be easily and safely accessed and enjoyed by everyone. The body of work also includes: a dedicated water supply, proper drainage for storm water servicing for year-round use, and a forecourt to separate small and large dogs.

There will be community engagement opportunities this year as the project gets underway.

Update: Yonge North Subway Extension

On December 8, 2021, Metrolinx President and CEO, Phil Verster, issued a statement that in response to feedback from the Royal Orchard community...

"...Metrolinx has refined plans for the subway extension that will result in deeper tunnels and a route that travels under far fewer residential properties in the Royal Orchard community than the previous route. The changes mean the subway tunnels will follow a route that travels mostly under Bay Thorn Drive wherever possible once they turn east from Yonge Street to connect with the rail corridor. The previous route went under 40 homes and an additional 23 properties, whereas the new route goes under 20 homes and 15 additional properties."

In addition, Minister of Infrastructure, Kinga Surma announced the following in a January 12, 2022, letter to Wayne Emmerson, Chief Executive Officer &

Chairman of the Regional Municipality of York:

*"To further improve connectivity, regional balance, and equity, the Province will be expanding the project scope, making it a more comprehensive, improved overall project by **creating an additional station at Royal Orchard**. This will bring the total number of stations along the YNSE to five."*

Metrolinx now says: "The province is working with our regional and municipal partners to explore potential funding opportunities that could support additional stations. Metrolinx is moving planning and design work forward for Cummer Station and Royal Orchard Station in case they can be included in the project."

Metrolinx's Environmental Project Report Addendum places the Royal Orchard station on Yonge approximately half-way between Thornhill Summit Drive and Royal Orchard Blvd.

Regrettably, York Region Council in a 17-4 vote February 3, 2022, rejected the community's concerted efforts to have the subway alignment adhere to Yonge Street.

Park Naming: Kerry Stratton Commons

Most of our Thornhill neighbourhoods are mature and well-established with limited opportunities to name new parks. That is why I am especially pleased to announce the naming of **Kerry Stratton Commons** at 328 John Street on the north side a short distance east of Bayview Avenue.

Kerry Stratton, a long-time Markham-Thornhill resident, was a world-renowned celebrated conductor, music director and radio personality. In the course of his international career he conducted orchestras in 35 countries throughout Europe, North America and Asia.

In addition, Kerry's family has created **"Birders For ALS"** to raise awareness and funds for ALS Canada and to promote the mental health benefits of birding. The campaign begins on World Migratory Bird Day, May 14, 2022, and continues through to the end of September. Details can be found on the ALS Canada website at **http://support.alsevents.ca/BirdersForALS**.

