

DEPUTATION REQUEST

REGIONAL COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 16, 2021

Subject: Alternate 2051 Forecast & Land Needs Assessment Scenarios

Spokesperson: Peter Miasek

Name of Group or person(s) being represented (if applicable):

Unionville Residents Association

Brief summary of issue or purpose of deputation:

Request additional intensification scenarios be analyzed for Markham. Request York Region Council to defer any decision until after this analysis is reviewed.

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

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Unionville Residents Association
Deputation on “Alternative 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios”
York Regional Council Special Meeting, September 16, 2021, Agenda Item F.1

URA-LandNeedsAssmt2021-09-16

This is an official deputation from the Unionville Residents Association (URA). We are one of Markham’s largest and most active resident associations. We actually set up a sub committee last spring to study and respond to the land needs assessment work. We met privately with York Region planning staff and convened a full members’ briefing by Markham planning staff.

Our association advocated hard, both with Markham Council and at the York Region Planning Advisory Committee, to study higher intensification scenarios than the original 50% proposed in the March 18 staff report. We all understand that higher intensification

- preserves agricultural land for a longer period
- requires less infrastructure per capita
- is better for transit and active transportation
- provides more opportunities for affordable housing types
- is a key part of reaching net zero Greenhouse Gas emissions by 2050

The Growth Plan recognizes the benefits of intensification and the need for more, not less, as time goes on.

We also noted that Markham already has a target of 60% intensification set back in 2011, and is achieving roughly 63% intensification. So the recommended target in the March 18 report of 52% for Markham was perceived as a step back.

We are pleased that staff has done this modeling. Even though the range of scenarios with detailed information is very narrow, the effect on Markham from the new recommended phased 55% scenario is over 300 hectares of agricultural land saved to beyond 2051. However, the intensification level for Markham in this new recommended scenario is still only 56%.

It is unfortunate that staff has not provided the additional detail on the local municipal impact of the other scenarios that were studied, namely region-wide targets of 55% and 60%. **These are very legitimate scenarios.** Don’t forget that, back in 2019, staff was recommending 60%, and made many good arguments supporting that target! We’ve asked staff for that information but no response yet.

We need this information because we are still in a conundrum. Why is higher intensification than 56% for Markham “potentially unrealistic” (to quote from the staff report), when the City is achieving 60%+? To quote from the Markham staff report of July 12, “both residents and committee felt that the City should be able to maintain or exceed the 60% intensification target”.

Everyone agrees that intensification is desirable, but is it achievable? The purported reason always given against more intensification is the need for a balance of housing, and questions as to whether the market will accept largely apartment housing stock. Certainly our perspective in Markham, based on current developer

applications and plans, is very positive about market acceptance of apartments. In fact, Markham could readily achieve almost 100% intensification within the built boundary, if you believe developer claims.

We have three asks of Council:

1. Please direct staff to provide you some scenarios to review where Markham reaches 60% or more intensification! This might require shifting population targets, or different phasings, but let's see the analysis.
2. Please direct staff to provide more detail on the scenarios, including local municipal impact of each one.
3. Please defer any decision on the final intensification target until you obtain and review this additional information.

Attachment 3 of the staff report (pasted below) shows the significant whitebelt savings of 300 hectares in Markham resulting from the staff recommendation. Let's find out how much more is possible with 60% or more intensification.

