

URA COMMUNITY IMPACT DURING 2019-2024

Together our Voice is Stronger

January, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The URA has been involved in many issues over the past 6 years to improve our community. These include:

- *Commenting, deputing and intervening in about 20 proposed new developments in our area with the objective of balancing proposed density and urban form with transportation infrastructure, green space and social infrastructure.*
- *Closely tracking and commenting on transportation infrastructure proposals including Yonge Subway North Extension and various arterial road widenings in our area.*
- *Educating our members and advocating with the province on social infrastructure needs – schools, hospitals and universities.*
- *Advising and advocating for Unionville Main Street revitalization.*
- *Educating our members on key Markham bylaws.*
- *Supporting green initiatives such as Blue Box, tree planting and energy conservation.*
- *Advocating to the Province on changes to the development process and local governance.*
- *Improving residents' opportunity to engage with each other and their elected representatives.*

Our plans for 2025 are to continue to advance these initiatives.

The Unionville Residents Association (URA) is a not-for-profit corporation incorporated in 1974 to protect the interests of the Unionville community. Our vision and focus is to improve our community through public education, resident engagement and representation. For more details about URA please read [About Us page](#).

A recent survey of our members and subscribers, conducted in Fall, 2024, showed that the top four issues for respondents were: managing development and growth, traffic, community facilities and crime prevention. URA has programming in all of these areas and others.



MANAGING DEVELOPMENT

- In our rapidly growing community, the URA has been a key voice in commenting and deputing to Markham Council and York Region (when needed) on urban development in Unionville, addressing potential challenges of over-

development and ensuring transportation infrastructure, green spaces and adequate social infrastructure were prioritized.

- On many occasions, the developers have chosen to appeal a Council decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT). As needed, URA has become an intervenor in these hearings as either a party or participant.
- Ultimately, the City and the developers have typically agreed to adjust the sizes and heights of the development projects to better balance planned population to infrastructure.
- We have also been very involved in development of the Markham Centre Secondary Plan (including Technical Advisory Committee for Markham Centre Community Energy Plan) and the Markville Secondary Plan. These are intended to guide development in these Major Transit Station Areas.
 - We used drafts of the Markham Centre Secondary Plan to comment on and track adherence by staff and developers for the following projects (proceeding west to east): Hilton, Ayreh, Times Group, No Frills Plaza (Smart Centres), Kingdom, Metropia, Rockport, One Piece Ideal, BMW, Hildebrand, Mercedes Benz, Digram. (Helen Ave).
 - We are inputting to the Markville Secondary Plan and have used it to evaluate the development proposal from Cadillac Fairview-Markville.
- We also closely tracked and commented on other proposed developments in our area:
 - Sit on advisory committee for development of the Unionville Commons senior living tower and the adjacent Minto townhouse development.
 - Unionville Re-Dev Corp aka Watford Group (west side of Unionville Main St)
 - Other developments on north side of Highway 7 adjacent to Markham Centre (Hildebrand, Scardred)
 - York Downs development followup as needed. (We were extensively involved in 2016-2018 in reaching a negotiated settlement with the developers).
- Councillor McAlpine frequently updates the URA on the progress of the applications so that we can track how our interventions are faring.
- URA was also heavily involved in commenting on the updating of the York Region Official Plan (2022), expressing concern that the intensification target was too low resulting in more farmland loss than necessary. Focus now shifts to development of Markham's Official Plan, starting in early 2025.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE



HOV lanes and new multi use paths. We engaged with transportation experts, sat on stakeholder committees and held a URA member workshop. Members voted to oppose the widening and to request more studies. However, the Region left the EAs as is and they were approved by Province.

- URA was also heavily involved in the Transportation Master Plan, finalized in 2022. We were pleased that the plan reduced the extent of the road widenings. For example, Kennedy Rd north

- URA closely follows all transit developments in our area, including improvements to GO Transit and to York Region Transit/VIVA. We are a strong supporter of the Yonge St North Subway Extension.
- URA was extensively involved in York Region's Environmental Assessment studies for widening of arterial roads like 16th Avenue and Kennedy Road to 6 lanes for

of 16th and 16th Ave east of McCowan would be retained at 4 lanes. Further scope reductions have occurred in the Region's 10 Year Capital Plan, eg no widening of 16th Avenue east of Kennedy Rd.

- As a result of our negotiated settlement with the developers (York Downs) any widening of 16th would only take place to the North in this location, to better protect properties to the South.
- In 2023, URA published a position paper on traffic congestion mitigation from new developments in Markham. In summary, we supported intensification along rapid transit corridors, but this must be accompanied by investment in rapid transit, road improvements and social infrastructure.
- URA has also held sessions on winter road maintenance, where staff clarified Markham's policy on plowing and salting.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE



- URA wrote to the Ontario Ministry of Education in support of highly needed capital funding for Markham schools, and contributed to discussions on the YRDSB school planning process, demonstrating its commitment to educational and regional development.
- URA convened a members meeting with representatives of Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation to understand their funding needs and plans.
- URA convened a public panel with representatives of York University and other stakeholders to obtain an update on plans and programs including student housing, student transportation/parking and student services at York's new Markham campus.
- We addressed concerns with Bill 108 on Community Benefits Charge (Parkland Acquisition).

MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION



- Main Street is the gem of Unionville. It needs a revitalization while preserving its pedestrian-friendly small-town heritage feel.
- The URA sat on the advisory committee for the planning and vision for this street and urged Council to provide the required funding (\$15M).
- We continue to provide members with updates to ensure that they are aware of the potential disruptions during the upgrading period Q2 2024 to Q2 2025.
- We provided opportunities for the BIA to update members on the business trends in the area, and business turn-over issues.

CRIME PREVENTION/BYLAW COMPLIANCE

- Many councillors organize periodic sessions with York Region Police on crime prevention. While URA has not run its own sessions for several years, we always advise our members and subscribers of these sessions organized by others.
- We also held a public meeting with Markham's bylaw enforcement team and plan to do so in the future.

- URA also conducted an extensive review of the new Tree Preservation Bylaw and the new Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw and found they largely met our needs.

GREEN INITIATIVES



- URA supported the “Blue Box” pilot program, and promoted policies aimed at reducing household wastes.
- We supported the policy on tree planting and green cover, and provided opportunities for the City to dialogue with the URA members. Markham has over 4000,000 new trees with about 20,000 planted in the Ward 3 area over the past 2 years.
- We organized 2 sessions with the Energy Conservation team regarding pilots being conducted for lower emissions from home heating, and investment being provided by government, utilities and suppliers.
- We informed our members about new flood plane mapping provided by TRCA.

PROVINCIAL CHANGES TO DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND GOVERNANCE

- The Ford government has made major changes to many aspects of the development process. URA submitted comments on several problematic items in Bills 109 and 23, including the reduction of parkland dedication requirements for high-density developments, the weakening of the review role of Conservation Authorities and the removal of resident associations from the OLT appeal process.
- The government has also been studying changes to how York Region is governed. For example, all planning authority is now with the lower-tier municipalities. URA submitted comments in 2019 and may do so again.

ENGAGEMENT



- We advocated for funding the summer music at the Bandstand for residents to gather, listen to talent, and patronize local businesses.
- We provided a written communication to Council on its proposed new council-staff relations policy, which appears to limit access to staff by residents and their elected representatives.
- We developed a list of residents’ groups in Unionville with a view of working on common issues, but also supporting anyone with specific causes.

URA PLANS FOR 2025

- Push for timely completion of Markham Centre and Markville Secondary Plan
- Actively participate in the development of Markham’s Official Plan

- Monitor new developments as presented by staff, and also keep an eye on applications in transition
- Keep discussions going on traffic and transportation to ensure low congestion and emission options
- Respond to the School Funding letter as appropriate to provide more quality teaching spaces so that our children are better prepared to compete
- Closely track progress on Main St. revitalization and help solve any problems that arise
- Look for more progress on seniors and affordable housing, especially via the Secondary Plan; monitor the negotiations for the federal funding available
- Monitor the path to 2050 Net Zero Energy Conservation ensuring that we deliver on the targets even as we grow our population and jobs
- Convene session for members on bylaw enforcement
- Monitor Council-Staff Relations so that residents have access to those who serve us