

Markham Community Meeting

Wednesday, March 25, 2009

Brother Andre Catholic High School
6160 16th Ave. E.
Markham, Ontario

Summary Notes

Attendance:

There were 45 participants at the Community Meeting.

Open House (6:00 pm to 7:00 pm)

- Participants were invited to walk around, view informative panels and ask questions to available staff.

Opening Remarks (7:00 to 7:15 pm)

- Welcome by Amanda Kennedy, DPRA
 - Introduction to the Town of Markham's Growth Management Strategy and the Transportation Strategic Plan.
- Councillor Carolina Moretti (Ward 4) and Councillor John Webster (Ward 5) welcomed the audience and provided opening remarks.

Presentation – Growth Management Alternatives (7:15 pm to 7:45 pm)

- Presentation by Valerie Shuttleworth – Director of Planning and Urban Design, Town of Markham
 - The provincial, regional and local context for growth
 - The approach that Markham has taken to plan for residential and employment growth
 - Some of the options that the Town has been examining, including potential strategies for intensification
- Presentation is available on-line at:
http://www.markham.ca/NR/rdonlyres/40639712-ADB1-4304-AB6C-F78A9D4747D7/0/GMS_communitypres_090311.pdf

Audience Polling Activity (7:45 pm to 8:00 pm)

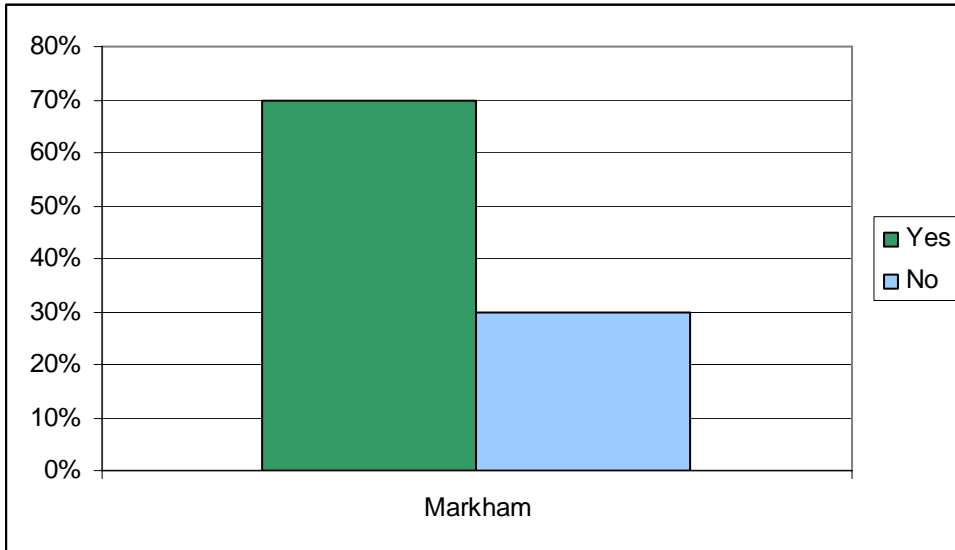
- Participants were provided with a hand-held polling device to respond to the list of questions posed.

Polling Questions (Facilitated by Valerie Shuttleworth)

Note: An interactive and innovative polling technology was used at the community meetings to elicit feedback from the participants. The polling tool allowed participants to answer multiple-choice question immediately followed by a presentation of the results. This polling exercise was one method used to gather feedback from participants attending the public events. The sample sizes were small and therefore, the results of the polling exercise are *not statistically significant*.

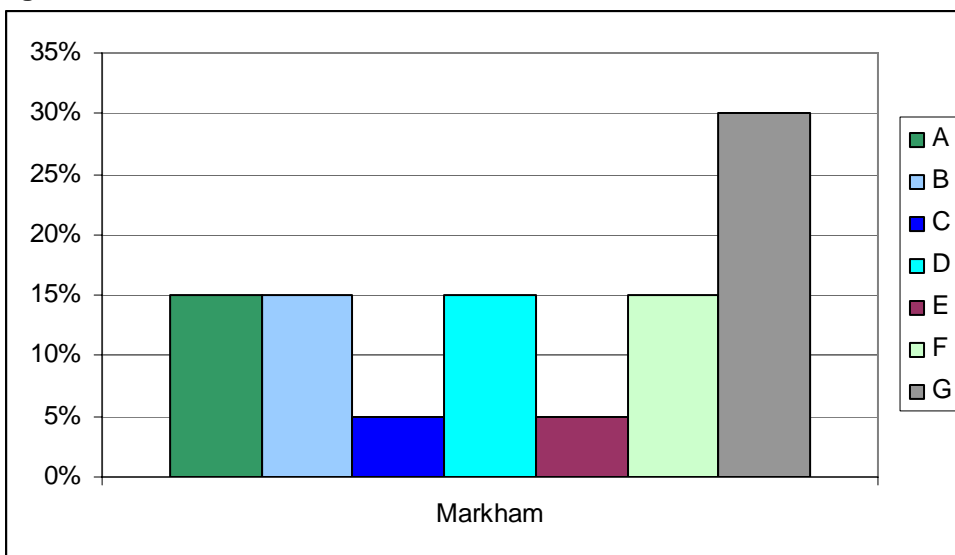
Question 1: Do you agree with the "environment first" approach to planning for new development

Figure 1: Markham, n =30



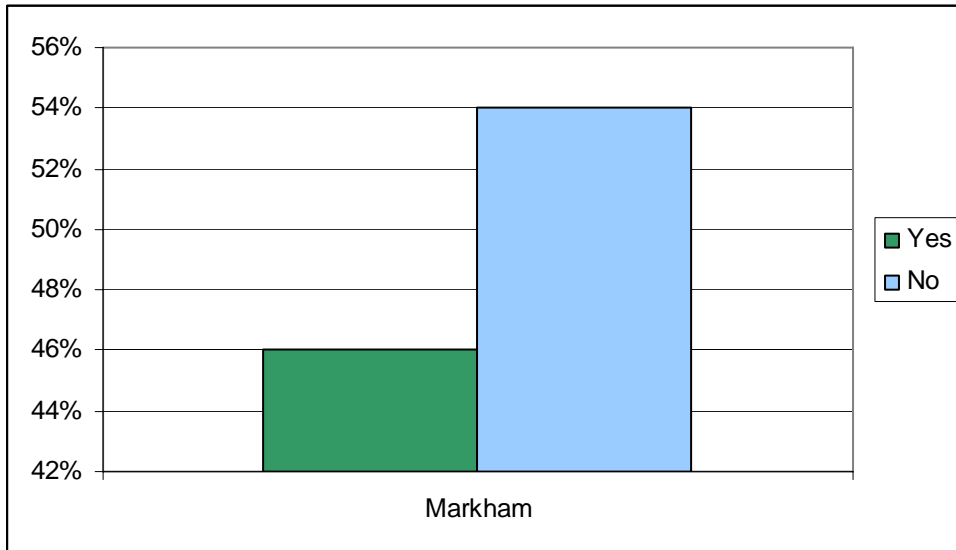
Question 2: What is the most important guiding principle:

Figure 2: Markham, n =20



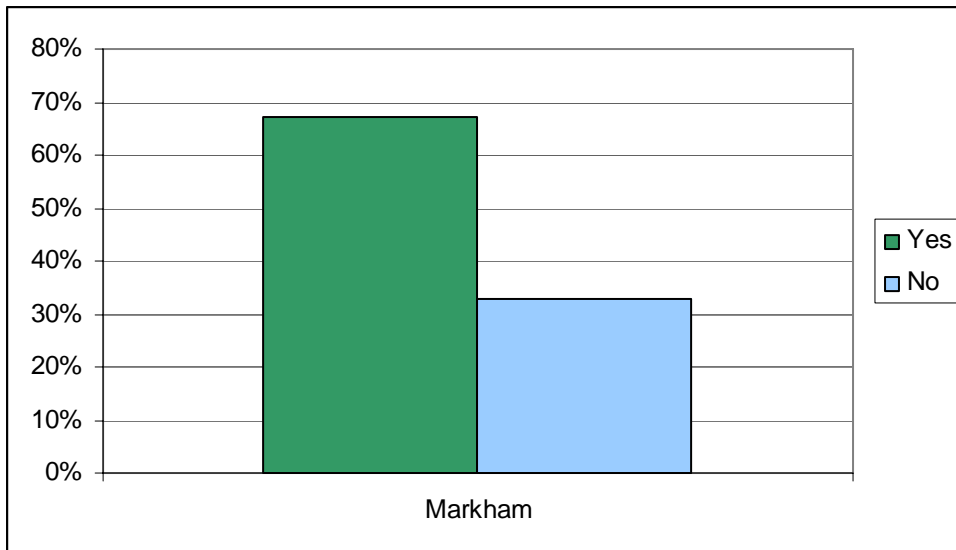
Question 3: Do you agree with accommodating the majority of new residential growth in the current urban area (Settlement Area)?

Figure 3: Markham, n =28



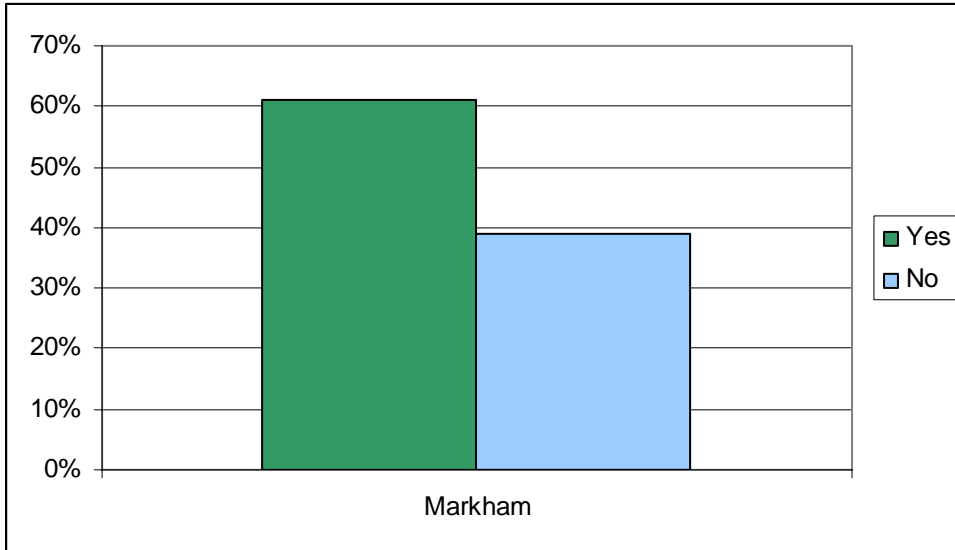
Question 4: Do you agree that the Town should balance residential intensification with the development of additional lower density housing to ensure a diverse housing mix?

Figure 4: Markham, n =27



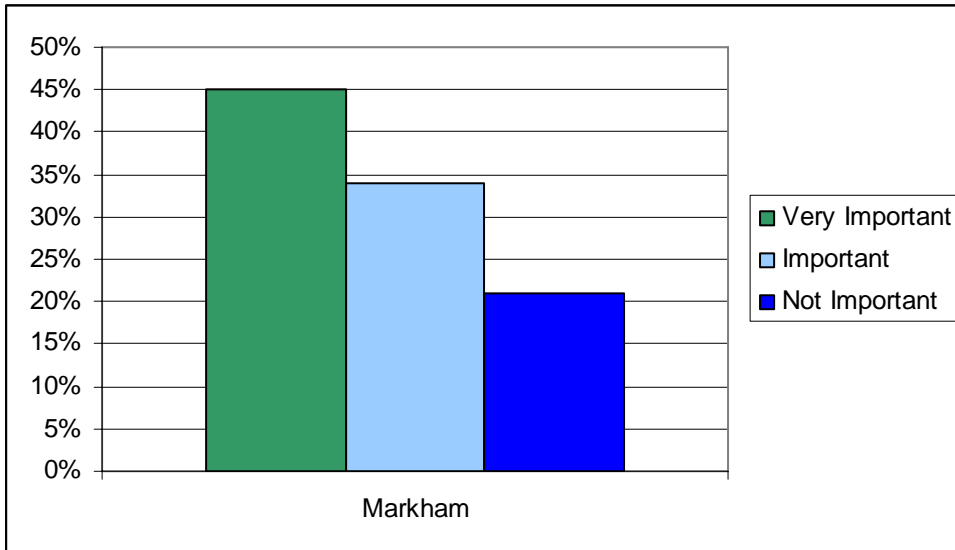
Question 5: Do you agree with expanding the Town's urban area into the Whitebelt to accommodate lower density residential growth?

Figure 5: Markham, 31



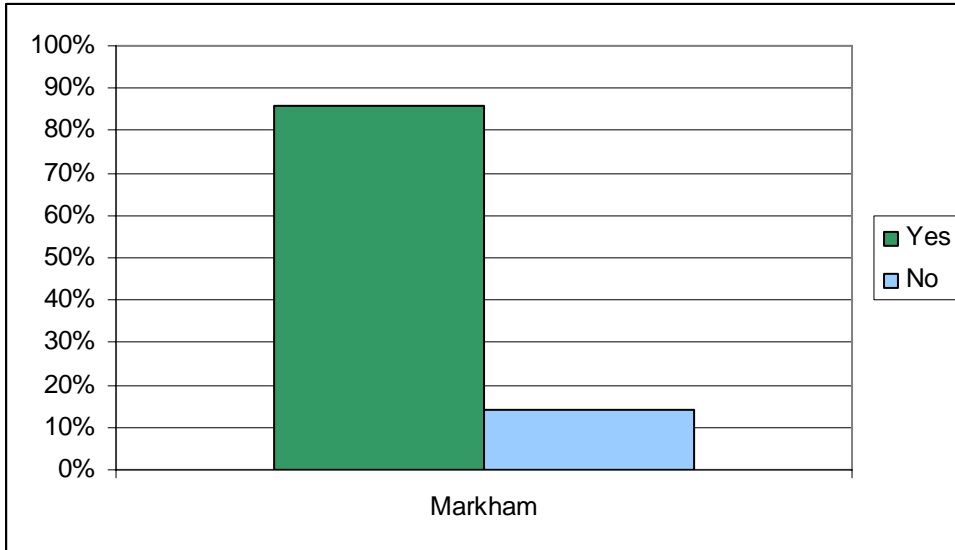
Question 6: How important is it to have a mix of housing types (e.g., single-detached, semi-detached, townhouses, apartments) in new development?

Figure 6: Markham, n =29



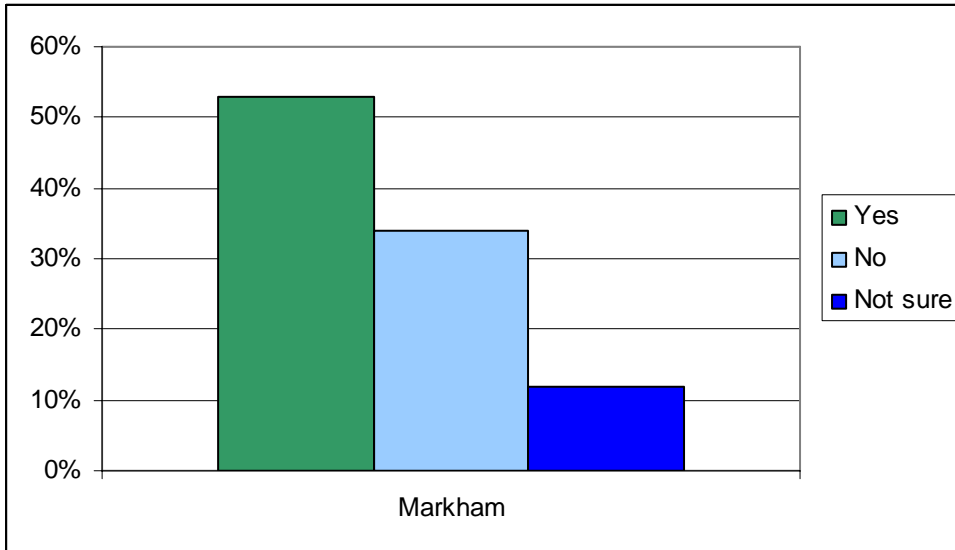
Question 7: Do you agree generally with the approach of distributing residential intensification to key locations with proposed rapid transit services?

Figure 7: Markham, n =28



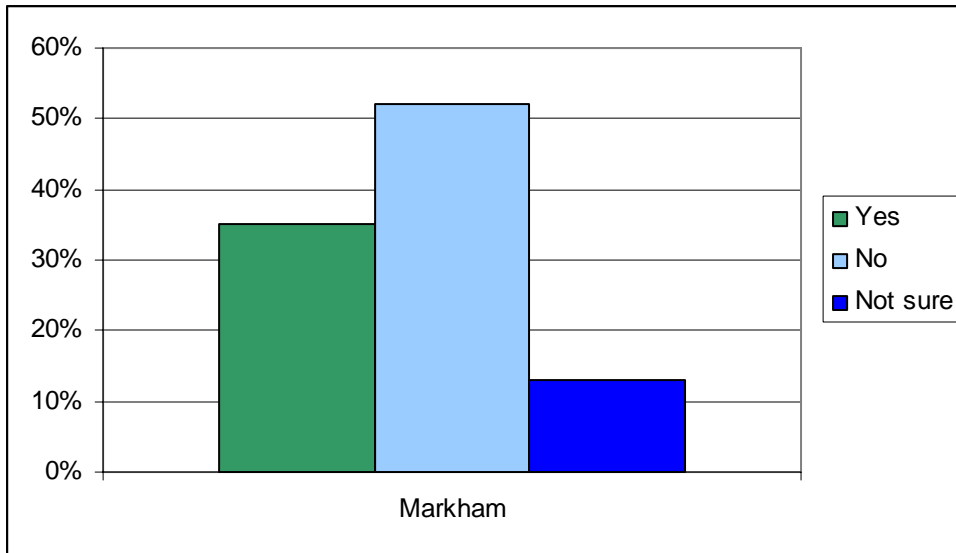
Question 8: Do you agree with the intensification areas identified?

Figure 8: Markham, n =32



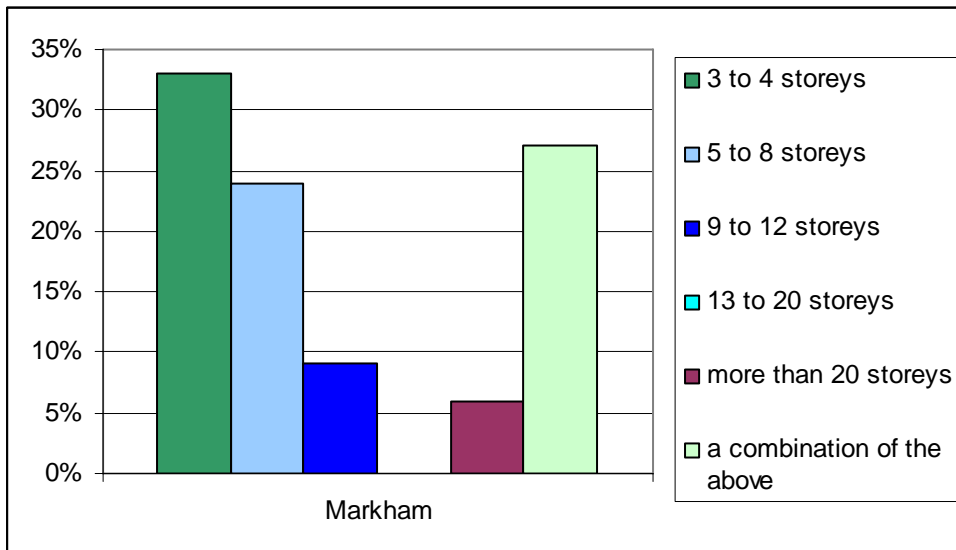
Question 9: Are there any additional intensification areas that should be considered?

Figure 9: Markham, n =31



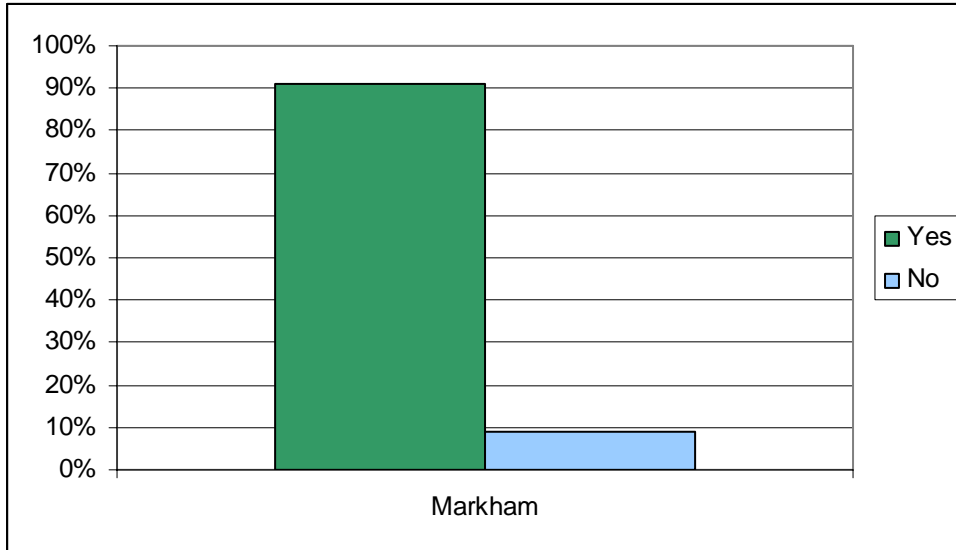
Question 10: If a significant amount of intensification were to be in the form of apartment buildings, what building height would you prefer?

Figure 10: Markham, n =33



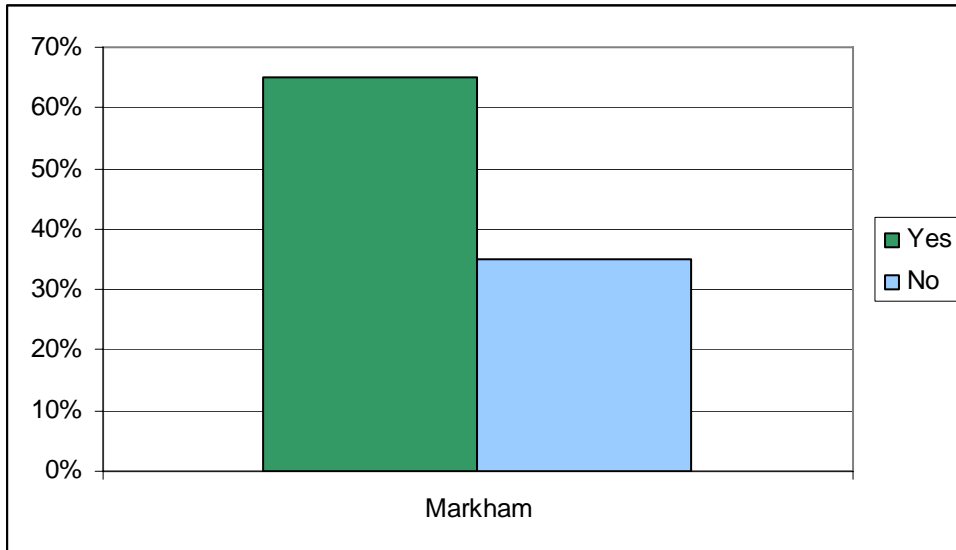
Question 11: Do you agree with reserving land to accommodate employment growth over the long term?

Figure 11: Markham, n =34



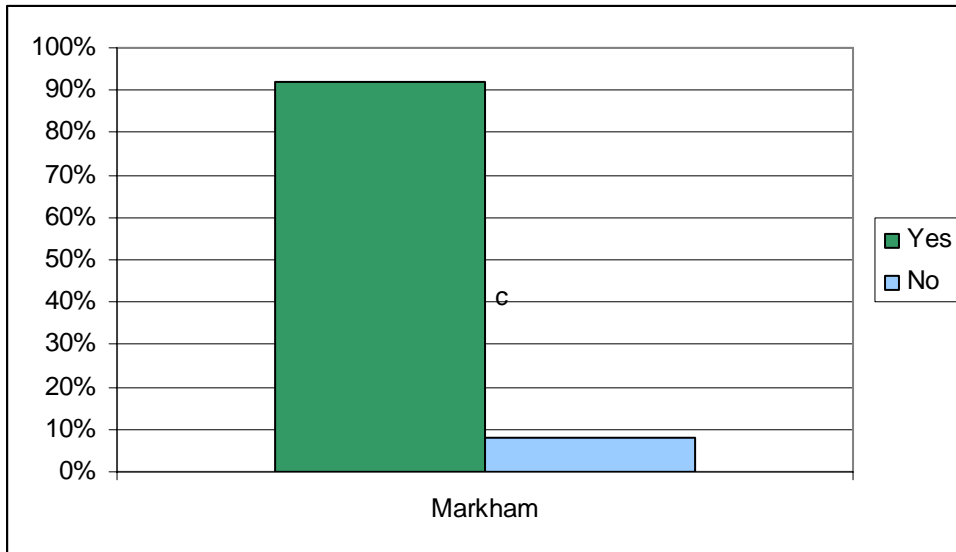
Question 12: Do you agree, that in addition to intensification, employment should be accommodated in the Whitebelt to ensure an adequate supply of land?

Figure 12: Markham, n =31



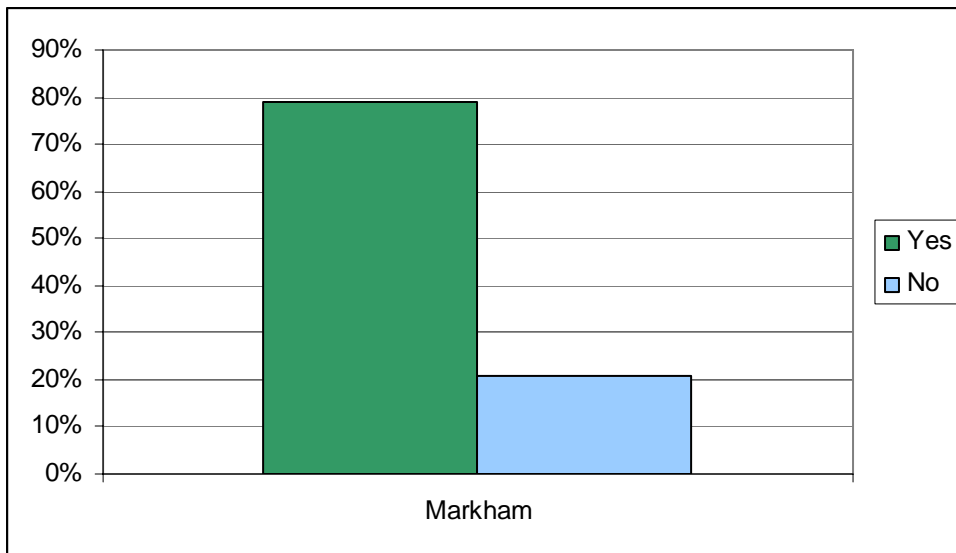
Question 13: Do you support adding more jobs within the current urban area (Settlement Area) through intensification in existing business parks?

Figure 13: Markham, n =24



Question 14: Do you support adding more jobs within the current Settlement Area by having some types of employment in new residential development (e.g., ground floor commercial uses in apartment buildings)?

Figure 14: Markham, n =33



Questions (8:00 to 8:05 pm)

Note: Questions and answers were not recorded verbatim

Question:

How will you use the results of the polling exercise? Concern that responses aren't statistically significant

Answer:

We are conducting the same questions in the four community meetings across Markham and in the workbooks that will be distributed at the end of the meeting. They are also available on-line for download. The compiled answers from all the community meetings and the polling exercise will be combined with the results received through other workbooks submitted. We will look at all the comments provided and answers through the polling exercise and present the findings to Town Council along with our selection of the preferred alternative.

Question:

Will you be sharing the results of the polling exercise with the public and participants at other sessions?

Answer:

All results from the polling exercise are public information and will be available on-line.

Question:

What is the sample size for the polling exercise?

Answer:

We recognize that the polling exercise is not an accurate scientific sample. We are collecting feedback from Town of Markham residents similar to the Click with Markham process.

Question:

Will the results of the polling exercise be used for future planning?

Answer:

We recognize that the polling results are not statistically valid. We are conducting the exercise to get a general sense of where we are going and if the ideas are supported by Town residents. The results of the polling exercise will be supported by scientific information based on planning studies. We will present the results of the polling exercise and planning studies to Council as support for the preferred alternative. Our analysis may show a different alternative than the results demonstrated in the polling exercise. We are collecting information to see how the residents of Markham feel about the proposed options.

Question:

Councillor Webster would like to know how many participants present this evening live in Ward 4 and in Ward 5?

Answer:

There were 8 participants that indicated they were from Ward 4.
There were 17 participants that indicated they were from Ward 5.
Two indicated they were not from Ward 4 or Ward 5.

Presentation – Master Servicing Study (8:05 pm to 8:20 pm)

- Presentation by Allen Wu (Senior Development Engineer, Town of Markham)
 - Update on the Master Servicing Study
- Presentation is available on-line here:
http://www.markham.ca/NR/rdonlyres/E210A2C6-5D6A-4C48-AAF1-B3624DB133E8/0/GMS_servicingstudy_090311.pdf

Presentation – Markham Transportation Strategic Plan (8:20 pm to 8:35 p.m.)

- Presentation by Brian Hollingworth, IBI Group
 - Update on the status of the Transportation Strategic Plan
- Presentation is available on-line here:
http://www.markham.ca/NR/rdonlyres/EF429246-6356-4E64-8195-6FB88E22BF7C/0/GMS_transportationplan_090311.pdf

Polling Questions (8:35 pm to 8:45 pm) (Facilitated by Brian Hollingworth)**Questions and Answers (8:35 pm to 9:00 pm)****Note: Questions and answers were not recorded verbatim**

Question:

I have been a homeowner in Markham for 5 years. I have not seen anything in this presentation about what is currently being done today with respect to dealing with growth issues, such as traffic, sidewalks and bike lanes that do not exist.

Answer:

Your point is well taken. Small changes are important as well. There are many initiatives currently underway. The development of a Cycling Master Plan has recently been completed and includes many initiatives to improve cycling options and safety around the Town. The Town of Markham has committed to funding the Cycling Master Plan and relevant actions. This plan will include improvements to the cycling paths. There are also initiatives underway for the continued improvement to the VIVA service to encourage use of transit. There is also a strategy in place to put busses in a dedicated lane that should reduce traffic congestion and make it safer to walk or cycle.

If there are particular concerns that you have noticed with respect to the condition of sidewalks we would like to hear them. The Town of Markham has a sidewalk improvement program where you can send in your concerns for sidewalks that require improvement. Please send us your specific comments to growth@markham.ca.

Question:

Since the province is mandating this growth, will they provide funding for required services (i.e. hospitals, schools, day care centres)?

Answer:

The province has indicated what the Town of Markham has to do with respect to growth and intensification, but not how the services will be funded. We are conducting a fiscal impact analysis to determine the fiscal costs associated with the growth strategy (police, hospital, fire, schools) and required amenities, services and infrastructure. The province has to understand what is planned and we have to work with them to ensure they are geared up for the future.

The intent is not to develop a strategy that can not be achieved. We will look at all the services that would be required to support the residences that will be there.

Question:

Are the intensification targets a minimum? How do we limit this to the target?

Answer:

The provincial target is a minimum of 40%. We would like to achieve better than that. We will monitor to make sure we are meeting the targets and adjust growth and development accordingly on a regular basis.

Question:

With respect to transit and getting around Markham and neighbouring communities, we have to pay a double transit fare; that discourages the use of transit. We will see more people walking long distances to avoid this double fare.

With respect to establishing new transit routes, why not consider the east west and north south transit (i.e. using existing road grid)?

Answer:

We recognize this as a disadvantage and there has been some action to try and eliminate this double fare. Some employers pay this for their employees to encourage transit use. There is also a GTA smart card possibly being developed that which will provide greater flexibility in fare payments.

With respect to establishing new transit routes and the consideration of the east west and north south routes, we are developing transit systems that compete with the automobile and actions that will get people out of their cars. – York Region is looking at improvements like restricted lanes to move people quickly. We recognize that it is important to utilize existing lanes, instead of building huge systems.

Question:

What happens to all the green lands in eastern Markham if the Pickering airport is approved?

Answer

The federal government already owns a lot of the land being proposed for the Pickering Airport. With respect to the development of the airport there is nothing confirmed at this time. The current proposal under consideration is using most of the lands within Pickering boundaries not lands in the Town of Markham. Unfortunately, the federal government does not have to comply with provincial or municipal plans with respect to developments on Federal Government lands. The Federal Government has developed a Green Space Plan with respect to lands located within the established greenbelt lands. This Plan meets some of the provincial and municipal requirements. At this time we can just monitor the process and the proposal to develop the airport. At this time there is no final answer.

Question:

How are the growth numbers for 40% to 60% measured? Are they based on number of housing units established?

Answer:

The Town of Markham will monitor building permits and the number of houses and apartments built. Within the apartment buildings there are a number of units identified and we will count the number of units proposed into the housing counts.

Question:

How do you make the developers establish the required number of apartments? How can you use legislation to make this to happen? You can not make them build what they don't want.

Answer:

That is correct. We can't make a developer put a building somewhere but we can establish zoning legislation to encourage developers to respond to the market. The developers will build what people want. Through the years, we have been shifting the market with the development industry. There are more apartment building being built than we have seen historically. We can encourage this type of building. The Provincial actions and intensification targets established are already affecting the housing market. We have to continue to make this shift happen. We have hired a housing market analyst that is currently looking at the market and will provide an analysis of how what we can expect market demand to be.

Question:

Intensification will have an impact on the amount of permeable surfaces currently available for the stormwater management system. The stormwater management system is not working now in many areas in Markham. There are many erosion areas. Is there new technology or new methods being investigated to mitigate the problem?

Answer:

We are updating the stormwater guidelines in consideration of climatic conditions as a result of climate change activities. This has included changing the design of storm sewers, updating stormwater management ponds to meet the capacity required. We will investigate the size of stormwater management ponds required as they must be developed to meet the needs of the climatic conditions and successfully mimic the impacts on water courses.

Question:

With the respect to downstream erosion activities, is there still a policy in to counter downstream activities as a result of water run-off? Markham used to take financial contributions for downstream restoration – is this still a policy?

Answer:

Not sure if that policy is still in place. Depending on the elevation of the stormwater management system, there might be policies that can assist with funding for erosion restoration. There are criteria that must be met to make sure the sites are being controlled and not negatively affecting the watercourse. It will depend on the situation. An analysis will have to be undertaken to determine if erosion restoration funding is applicable.

Question:

What does height bonusing mean?

Answer:

We operate under the Planning Act. There is a section of the Planning Act that allows municipalities to provide bonuses to developers in terms of giving them more height or density in exchange for benefits to the community. We are currently investigating protocols to take advantage of this section of the Planning Act. We will determine what the advantages may be to the community in the event that a developer wishes to take advantage of the options.

Question:

Would height bonusing reduce the footprint of the building the developer is putting up? Are there height restrictions?

Answer:

It is difficult to measure height verses footprint. More height would result in more density then the current zoning permits. We do have height restriction in some areas, such as around the Buttonville Airport. Generally they are height restrictions for low density development. We will investigate height limits when we are doing particular area studies. There already have been some identified. We will be putting height limits in place as part of the area studies.

Closing remarks by Amanda Kennedy, DPRA (9:00 p.m.)

Amanda Kennedy (DPRA) provided some closing remarks. Participants were welcome to leave, and those that were interested in continuing the conversation were invited to stay longer and ask additional questions of the presenters.

Closing remarks included comments about the

- Workbooks
- Comment forms
- Timeframes for engagement
- Next steps

Additional Questions & Answers (9:00 to 9:30 p.m.)

Note: Questions and answers were not recorded verbatim

Question:

With respect to the Markham areas identified for intensification, how will the area around Hwy 48 and the entrance to the historical area be impacted? Will this become a four lane highway? What has happened to making this a more urban stretch as opposed to big box stores?

Answer:

The urban design study established an end state for Markham Road between 16th and Major Mackenzie. There was zoning established for the west side that permitted big box retail. This is already zoned and it is difficult to shift the views of developers once zoning has been permitted. We have worked with certain developers with interest in the back of this site to establish the big box retail. We are hoping to infill the front of the site with more mixed use developments along the street. We have been working with a developer that proposed the establishment of a Shoppers Drug Mart. We worked with the developer for at least a year and agreed to the development of an apartment instead. We will continue to work with developers to establish apartments with retail options.

Question:

Will the highway through this area be a four lane or two lane road?

Answer:

There is an Environmental Assessment underway for Highway 48. One public meeting was held to discuss the process. A second public meeting is scheduled for the fall. The consultant is looking at the intensification targets for this area and reassessing the potential impacts.

Question:

Why is there no sign or linkage to the bypass to direct traffic away from Main Street?

Answer:

There should be better signage. We will look into this.

Question:

When will a link be developed for the Highway 48 bypass?

Answer:

It is a Regional road. We are working with the Region to make this happen. A sign is needed to discourage use of Main Street.

Question:

All the presentations this evening have been great. Brian's presentation on transportation was particularly good. During the transportation presentation you mentioned the majority of people live 20 minutes away from work. Many people are using cars to get to work. Cycling could be an option for travelling on arterials roads if routes existed. A cycling pathway on a 6 lane Highway 7 is a safety issue. We require a boulevard on the Regional road to encourage safe cycling routes. Can we work with the Region to make this happen?

Answer:

(Brian Lee, Town of Markham) The Town of Markham has gone on record that they do not want a on-street cycle lane on Highway 7 because of safety concerns. We are currently working with the Region to establish off street bike lanes.

(Brian Hollingworth). I agree that a 1.5 M white line on Highway 7 is not safe for cyclists. We do not want to encourage people to ride a bike with unsafe roads. The Markham Cycling Plan will encourage creating new paths to get people off the streets.

Question:

With respect to Transit in the Box Grove area, it is not a dependable option. Are there any plans in place to extend bus service to this area?

Also, is there a plan to extend the Donald Cousens Parkway to Steeles or to widen the streets?

Answer:

With respect to Steeles, there have been different options discussed that have included widening the road and creating a connection with the Parkway. There is currently an Environmental Assessment underway that presents differing opinions between City of Toronto and the Region.

There is a local need for the extension of the Donald Cousens Parkway and it will be built sometime this year.

With respect to transit in the Box Grove area, York Region just recently completed a short term servicing study that may include improvements in this area. The study indicated that everyone within the urban transit area should be within 400 m of a transit line.

Comments:

This section includes hand-written comments that were received after the Community Meeting.

There were 2 comment sheets received.

Comment Sheet #1

- Go train needs to run all day and into evening, with weekend service. NOW!
- Roads, i.e. Markham Road, have major traffic and its only 1 lane in each direction. Markham and BurOak/ Major Mac is developing so fast and the roads haven't been widened with more lanes!
- Buses need to run earlier. They mostly all don't start until 6:00 am.
- Cleaner looking streets, neighbourhoods! There is too much litter and garbage especially the boulevards and Swan Lake area. Town needs to be cleaning up more. All areas need to look like Unionville! Same goes for grass cutting the Town properly
- Garbage cans are needed at the mail boxes
- I am **NOT** in favour for a mosque to be built at 16th and Williamson. It is not suitable for the area for traffic, noise and parking. WRONG LOCATION FOR THIS KIND OF BUILDING

Comment Sheet #2

- Plans, plans plans!!? Let's not repeat Cornell, LIVE/WORK/PLAY is a great idea-why did it not work
- We want positive assurances that existing residents don't pay for development
- Val Shuttleworth – very informative
- Master Servicing – some interest, mostly nothing new – BUT see 2) above
- Transportation – nothing new
- Current cycling routes are inadequate.