

Deputation To DS Committee on Markham's Growth Management Strategy April 20, 2010.

In the development of the Town of Markham's Growth Management Strategy, the residents of Markham were consulted in the spring of 2009 as to preferred apartment building height, at 5 area meetings. I did my own analysis and the results of those consultations are as follows: 66% of respondents preferred apartment heights less than 8 storeys, and only 6% preferred heights over 20 storeys. The building height category receiving the most votes at three out of the 5 area meetings was the 5-8 storey category. The building height category receiving the most votes at the other two area meetings was the 3-4 storey category. These results support Councillors Shapero and Burke's proposal of a maximum height of 6 storeys for intensification areas outside the two main Regional Corridors. Staff is supposed to take public consultation into consideration, but I don't see any indication of the results of the spring 2009 consultations in their recommendation.

There has been a lot of talk about the number of apartment buildings required with the third option and height scares a lot of people, but you can achieve many of the densities you need, even along the regional corridors, in as well as between KDAs and Growth Centres, with lower height buildings of 4-6 storeys. With attractive high quality architecture and design, these buildings can attract the families, planners doubt can be attracted to high rise apartments and which they therefore believe must be housed in ground related units instead. Growth doesn't have to come in either of the two traditional forms, low density or high rise developments. Architects need to think outside the North American concept of high density in the form of high rise apartment buildings only, it's boring and repetitive. Many older European centres, achieve similar densities with 5-6 storey buildings in attractive traditional styles, framing city streets and squares. High quality architecture and detailed design add to the look and tourists love it, and so would people here. High rise has it's place, but we need to start thinking outside the high rise box and bring the best ideas the world has to offer in terms of high quality low to mid-rise architecture and design as well, otherwise Markham will be indistinguishable from Toronto.

Low density development of Whitebelt farmlands only contributes to increased car traffic, traffic congestion and gridlock, air pollution, noise pollution, greater demand for parking space and wider roads, growth in the duration of peak hour traffic and traffic infiltrating residential areas trying to find shortcuts which avoid the lengthy queues at congested intersections. It's not the solution, it is in fact the problem which has got us into the mess we are in today and from which we are currently trying to extricate ourselves.

Gobbling up farmland will not last forever. Sooner or later it will be all gone and we will have to plan for population and employment growth without the availability of new land. The difference between now and then? With 100% intensification now, we will still have the farmland in the future, and if we put it in the Greenbelt, it will be protected.

We know the Foodbelt doesn't just grow food. Farmers have always grown industrial crops as well as food crops. They have the right to produce whatever brings them the most income. The point is the farmland is still there, ready to grow nothing but food, if and when food scarcity and security become problematic and food prices rise high enough to make farmers want to switch back into food production. Toronto has paved all it's farmland. In the event of a food crisis, it has no farmers to turn to. Markham doesn't need to go down that road, we should be glad we still have farmland to save..

The 100% intensification option is the cheapest option. A few million dollars a year may not seem that much by itself, but when it comes on top of all the other growth expenses, the ever increasing water and wastewater rates and the expense of remediating and replacing aging

watermains, sanitary and storm systems, I don't see how the Town will be able to afford it all without large increases in property taxes and other charges.

All things considered, neither of the other two options have much to recommend them. It's a business as usual approach, which will destroy even more farmland, increase road traffic, has no height limit and which comes with higher costs to the taxpayer. The 100% Intensification Option with the No Urban Boundary Expansion and the Foodbelt proposal is less expensive, saves farmland and protects our food security, does not contribute to increased road traffic and acknowledges public consultation with the 6 storey height limit. I urge you all to acknowledge the overwhelming will of Markham residents and vote for the Third Option, 100% Intensification, the No Urban Boundary Expansion Option with the Foodbelt Proposal and the six storey height limit.

Eileen Liasi

Resident Thornhill.