

This Guide summarizes the intent and policy direction of the new Official Plan. You can review the full version of the Official Plan online by scanning the QR Code provided with your smartphone.



Planning Markham's Future

# YOUR GUIDE TO THE NEW CITY OF MARKHAM OFFICIAL PLAN

September 2012

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# What is an Official Plan?

**The new City of Markham Official Plan** sets out a long-term vision for the continued development of Markham as a vibrant, liveable city. It provides direction to Markham Council, residents, businesses and investors about the appropriate use of land and the appropriate form of development in Markham over the next 20 years. It also provides direction on the provision of services, such as transportation, that support development.

This new Official Plan is the result of a comprehensive planning exercise that was undertaken to determine how best to accommodate expected population and employment growth in Markham to the year 2031.

Over the past five years, Markham residents have been invited to provide input on a number of studies that have informed this Plan. These studies addressed topics such as community sustainability, environment, agriculture, employment, housing, recreation, culture, diversity, transportation and other municipal services. As well, residents have been involved in a number of area land use studies, such as the development of plans for Markham Centre, the Langstaff Gateway, and other communities.

The new Official Plan has not yet been approved by Markham Council. Before Council makes a decision about this Plan, we need to hear what you think.

This Guide summarizes the intent and policy direction of the new Official Plan. You are encouraged to read this Guide or the full version of the Plan, and provide your comments – either online, through attendance at community open houses and public meetings, or in writing. More information about how to make your views known is provided on page 20 of this Guide.

*This Guide summarizes the intent of the new Official Plan.*

# Why do we need a new Official Plan now?

**Within the last 10 years**, the Province of Ontario has put in place a number of provincial plans that directly affect planning in Markham. Examples of these plans are the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan).

The Greenbelt Plan identifies areas where urban growth cannot occur. For areas outside the Greenbelt where urban growth can occur, the Growth Plan identifies how this growth should occur. The provincial plans are implemented through the 2010 York Region Official Plan. Markham's Official Plan must conform to the York Region Official Plan.

The need to develop a 'Made in Markham' plan to accommodate sustainable community growth was also identified by City Council as one of the six City priorities known collectively as Building Markham's Future Together.

In addition, the City's current Official Plan needs to be updated to reflect the direction Markham has been taking in planning new communities in recent years.

**Markham's new Official Plan is made up of three parts:**

*Part I – contains the vision, goals, objectives, policies and maps that apply to Markham as a whole;*

*Part II – will contain secondary plans that provide more detailed policies and maps for smaller areas within Markham; and*

*Part III – will contain policies for specific properties that differ from the City-wide policies contained in Part I.*







# How will Markham grow?

**The new Official Plan** anticipates a population of approximately 422,000 in Markham by 2031, and approximately 240,000 jobs. This is approximately 100,000 more people and 75,000 more jobs than we have today.

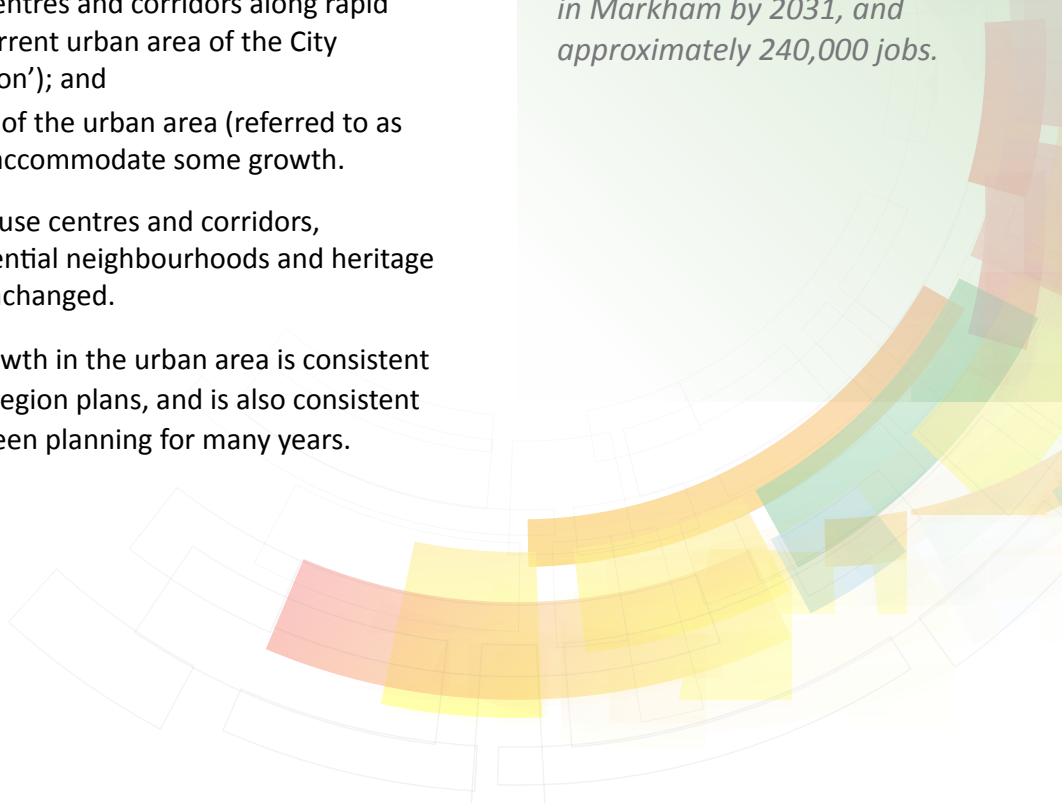
In May 2010, after extensive consultation with the public, Council made a decision about how this growth would be physically accommodated. The decision involved three main elements:

- Protecting the natural environment, in the form of an identified Greenway System that is off limits to development;
- Directing most of the residential growth (approximately 60 percent) to mixed-use centres and corridors along rapid transit routes within the current urban area of the City (referred to as 'intensification'); and
- Allowing limited expansion of the urban area (referred to as the Future Urban Area) to accommodate some growth.

By directing growth to mixed-use centres and corridors, established low density residential neighbourhoods and heritage districts can remain largely unchanged.

This strategy for focussing growth in the urban area is consistent with the provincial and York Region plans, and is also consistent with the way Markham has been planning for many years.

*The new Official Plan anticipates a population of approximately 422,000 in Markham by 2031, and approximately 240,000 jobs.*



# Markham Structure

**Our strategy** for accommodating growth results in a physical structure for the City that is shown in the Markham Structure Map.

The components are:

**Greenway System** – lands within the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Provincial Greenbelt, as well as protected environmental features outside of these areas;

**Countryside Area** – lands outside the Greenway System and outside the urban area, to be used primarily for agricultural purposes;

**Employment Areas** – lands which accommodate the majority of the economic activity within Markham, such as manufacturing, warehousing, office and supporting services;

**Neighbourhood Areas** – residential lands developed primarily with ground-related housing, together with supporting parkland, and lands devoted to institutional, retail and service uses;

**Mixed Use Neighbourhood Areas** – areas identified for higher intensity mixed-use development primarily in Centres and Corridors along rapid transit corridors; and

**Centres and Corridors** aligned along rapid transit corridors – the areas where most of Markham's intensification growth will occur.

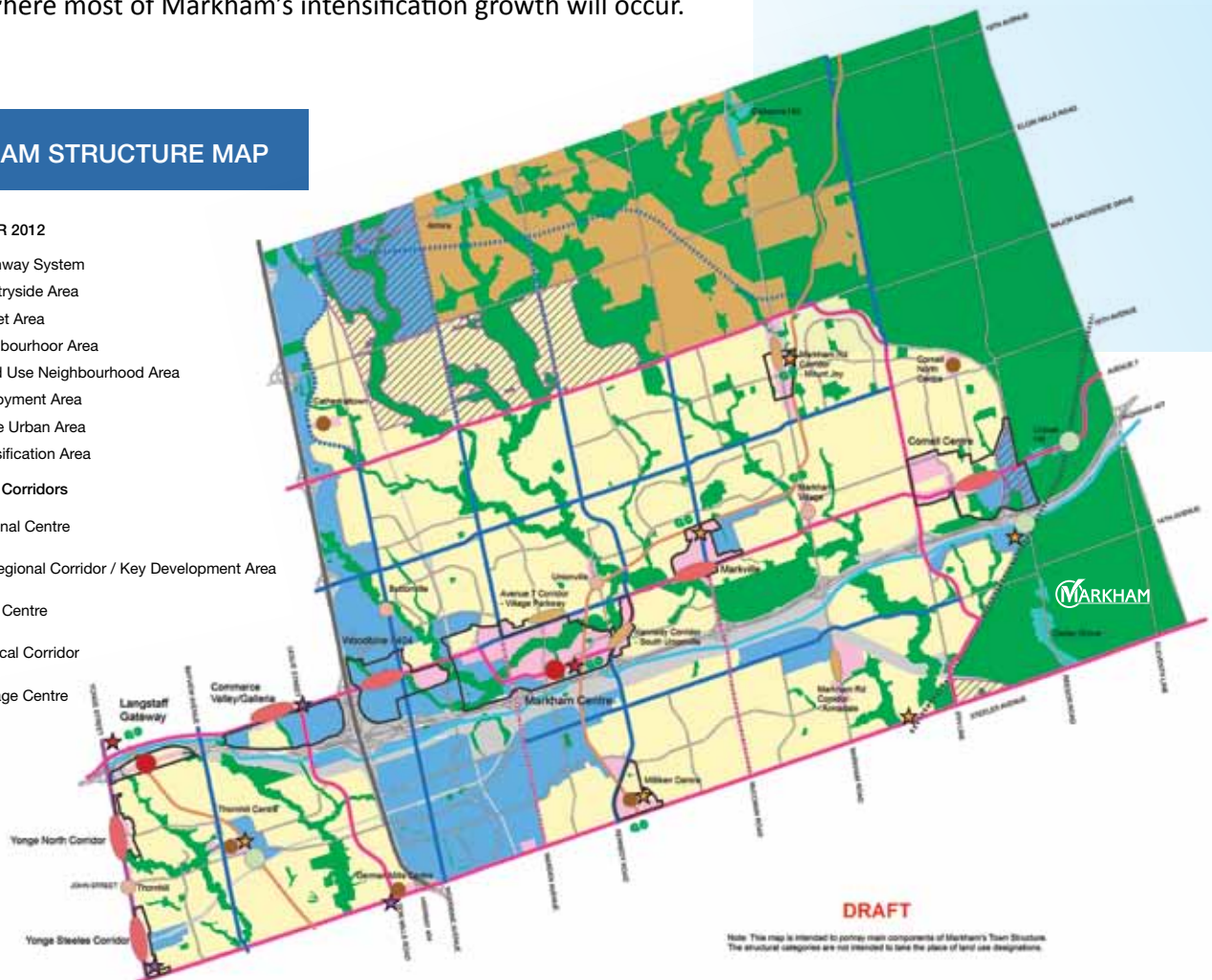
*Percentage of Markham's land area devoted to each component:*

Greenway	33%
Countryside	7%
Neighbourhood	39%
Mixed Use Neighbourhood	3%
Employment	11%
Other	7%
Total	100%

## MARKHAM STRUCTURE MAP

SEPTEMBER 2012

- Greenway System
  - Countryside Area
  - Hamlet Area
  - Neighbourhood Area
  - Mixed Use Neighbourhood Area
  - Employment Area
  - Future Urban Area
  - Intensification Area
- Centres and Corridors**
- Regional Centre
  - Regional Corridor / Key Development Area
  - Local Centre
  - Local Corridor
  - Heritage Centre





# Intensification Areas – Centres and Corridors

**Centres and Corridors** are intended to be developed with higher intensity mixed-use development that is served by rapid transit. The rapid transit routes include the planned Yonge Street subway extension, the Avenue 7 (Highway 7) rapid transit corridor, the future Highway 407 Transitway and GO rail lines.

The Centres and Corridors are categorized according to size and intensity of development. All of these Centres and Corridors will be developed with well-designed, pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented buildings.

**Regional Centres** – the majority of forecast growth will be directed to the Markham Centre and Langstaff Gateway regional centres. These areas will contain the highest concentration and greatest mix and intensity of uses and activities in Markham and will be developed with mid-rise and high-rise buildings. These regional centres will have a long-term target of one job for every resident.

**Regional Corridors/Key Development Areas (KDAs)** – these are areas of retail and commercial development along the Yonge Street and Avenue 7 rapid transit corridors where opportunities exist for more intensive residential or office uses. These areas will support mid-rise and high-rise buildings.

**Local Centres and Corridors** – serve as important neighbourhood focal points and main streets and contain a mix of activities but on a smaller scale that serve nearby communities. These centres are served by local transit offering connections to rapid transit, and in some cases contain GO stations.

**Heritage Centres (Thornhill, Buttonville, Unionville and Markham Village)** – any new development in these centres will be consistent with approved Heritage District Conservation Plans.

The Regional Centres and Regional Corridors/Key Development Areas are priority areas for intensification. Not all Local Centres and Heritage Centres have potential for further intensification.

These Centres and Corridors and their locations along rapid transit corridors are shown on the Centres and Corridors and Transit Network Map on page 12 of this Guide.

## Regional Centres

- Markham Centre
- The Langstaff Gateway

## Regional Corridors/KDAs

- Yonge Steeles Corridor
- Yonge North Corridor
- CommerceValley/  
Galleria
- Woodbine/404
- Markville
- Cornell Centre

## Local Corridors

- Avenue 7/Village Parkway
- Kennedy/South Unionville
- Markham Rd/Armadale
- Markham Rd/Mount Joy

## Local Centres

- Thornhill Centre
- German Mills Centre
- Milliken Centre
- Cathedraltown
- Cornell North Centre

*Mixed-use development refers to having a variety of uses (e.g., apartments, stores, offices or services) either within the same building, or in separate buildings within a property.*



# The Vision for Markham to 2031

**The new Official Plan** puts forward a vision for sustainable growth in Markham to 2031 leading to a vibrant, liveable city.

Although Markham has been on a path to sustainable community development for many years, this Plan articulates the vision more comprehensively, and in more detail. It is also consistent with Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan which is an overarching plan for the City to achieve an environmentally, economically, socially and culturally vibrant community.

The vision for sustainable growth outlined in the new Official Plan is based on four key themes:

- Protecting the natural environment and agricultural lands
- Building complete communities
- Increasing travel options
- Maintaining a vibrant and competitive economy

The goals and strategic objectives associated with these four themes provide the basis for all of the policies in the new Official Plan.

## Protecting the Natural Environment and Agricultural Lands

**Recognizing the importance** of the natural environment in Markham, this Plan identifies a protected Greenway system of natural features. This system includes valleylands and river and stream corridors, wetlands and woodlands, sensitive groundwater features, significant wildlife habitat and the buffers needed to protect these features and functions. The system also includes agricultural lands within the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt.

The vision recognizes the importance of agricultural functions to the sustainability of Markham. Markham has a rich history as a settled agricultural community and contains some of the most productive agricultural lands in southern Ontario. The countryside areas complement the natural heritage areas by providing additional environmental benefits and at the same time, have the potential to support a viable and sustainable agricultural presence.



**Goal:** *To ensure the protection and enhancement of Markham's waterways, woodlands and wetlands, and promote the enhancement of ecological corridors and the protection of agricultural lands.*

# Building Complete Communities

**A key goal of this Plan** is to create a city in which the day-to-day needs of Markham's residents, including housing, employment, recreation, shopping, health care, education and personal service, are met.

This will be accomplished by planning for compact urban development, accommodating a mix and range of housing, job opportunities and services to all residents regardless of age or income, with convenient access by transit, walking or cycling.

To reduce the distance between where people live and where they work, Markham will need to diversify the types of housing that are available and increase the supply of employment lands to accommodate a range of employment opportunities, among other things. In addition, we need to facilitate the development of mixed-use, higher-density buildings in the Centres and Corridors located along the rapid transit network.

High urban design standards and sustainable building practices will be applied to all development, but particularly within Centres and Corridors. The vision for these areas is to have well-designed buildings housing a variety of activities located along attractive pedestrian-friendly streets with access to parks, squares and open spaces at key locations.

By focussing growth in these Centres and Corridors, the character and pattern of established neighbourhoods and Markham's historic villages can be maintained.

**Goal:** *To develop sustainable, compact and complete communities incorporating healthy active living, excellence in community design, efficient infrastructure, housing choices for all, and facilities and services meeting community needs, including a range of travel choices.*







## Increasing Travel Options

**The challenge for Markham** over the next 20 years is to increase transportation choices in order to accelerate the transition from a primarily automobile dependent community to one where travel includes alternative modes such as transit, cycling and walking.

This includes encouraging a reduction in the number and length of trips, and increasing overall accessibility for all residents by arranging land use patterns so that jobs and services are close to where people live.

An emphasis is being placed on creating walkable streets and the integration of more pedestrian and transit-oriented land uses with improved pedestrian, cycling and transit access.

**Goal:** *To increase the level of accessibility and travel options for all residents, while reducing the environmental impacts of transportation.*







## Maintaining a Vibrant and Competitive Economy

**Complete communities** rely on a strong economy.

Markham will build on its success as a major employment centre within York Region and the Greater Toronto Area, and continue to offer attractive accommodation to businesses of all types. This includes identifying an inventory of lands to accommodate a range of employment uses such as manufacturing, warehousing, and offices, and resisting pressures to develop these lands for other uses. The intent is to ensure the long term viability of the employment areas and a diverse and market-ready supply of well-located land for these employment uses.

Large scale office development will be focussed within Markham Centre and the Langstaff Gateway and other Centres served by rapid transit. New retail and service development will be planned for in a transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly mixed-use context within the community.

The vision also includes healthy and vibrant main streets, including existing heritage main streets such as Main Street Unionville and Main Street Markham, and new main streets such as those proposed in Milliken Centre and Cornell Centre.

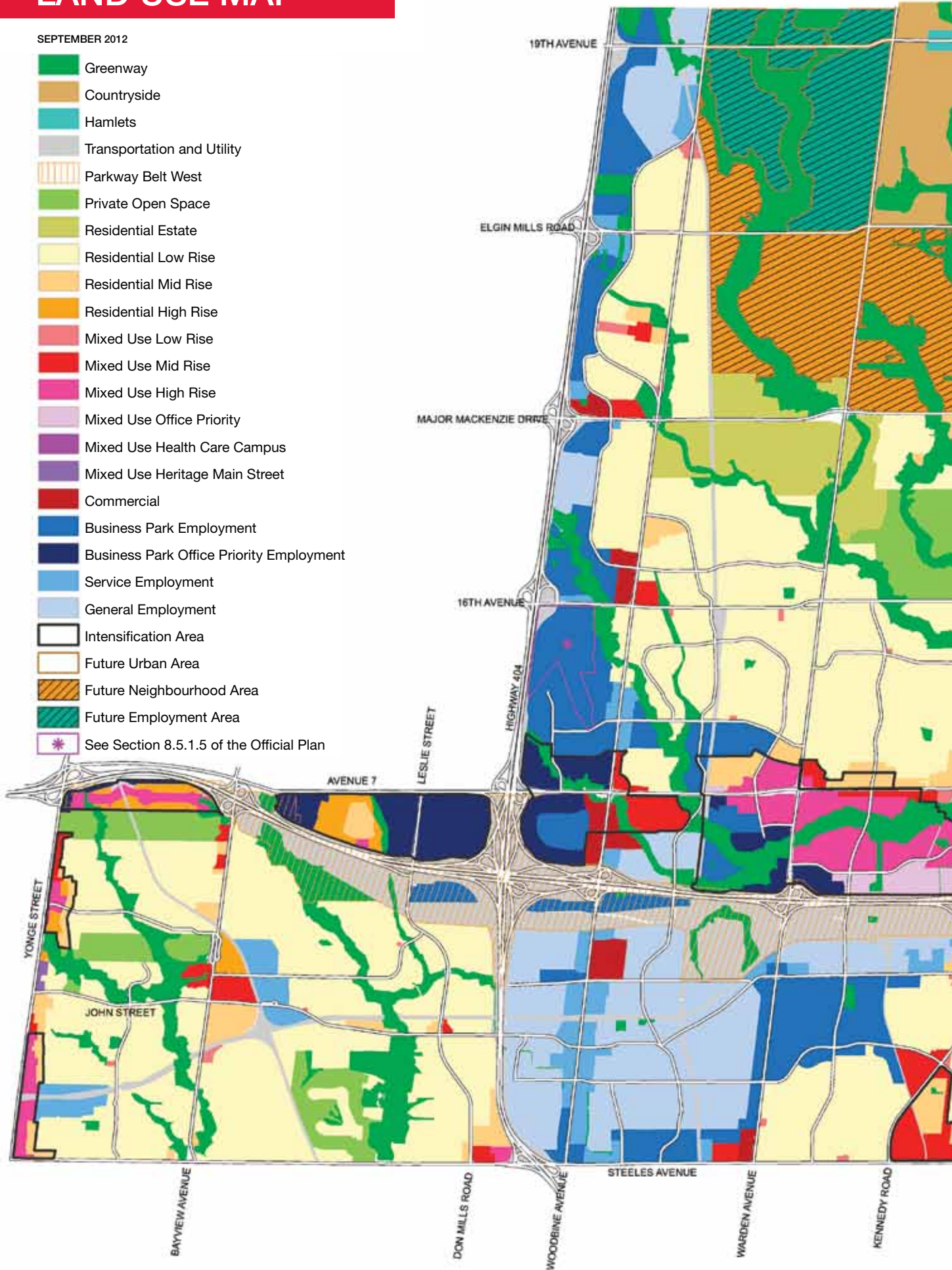
**Goal:** *To provide for a vibrant, competitive economy to sustain the financial health of residents, businesses and the municipality.*



# LAND USE MAP

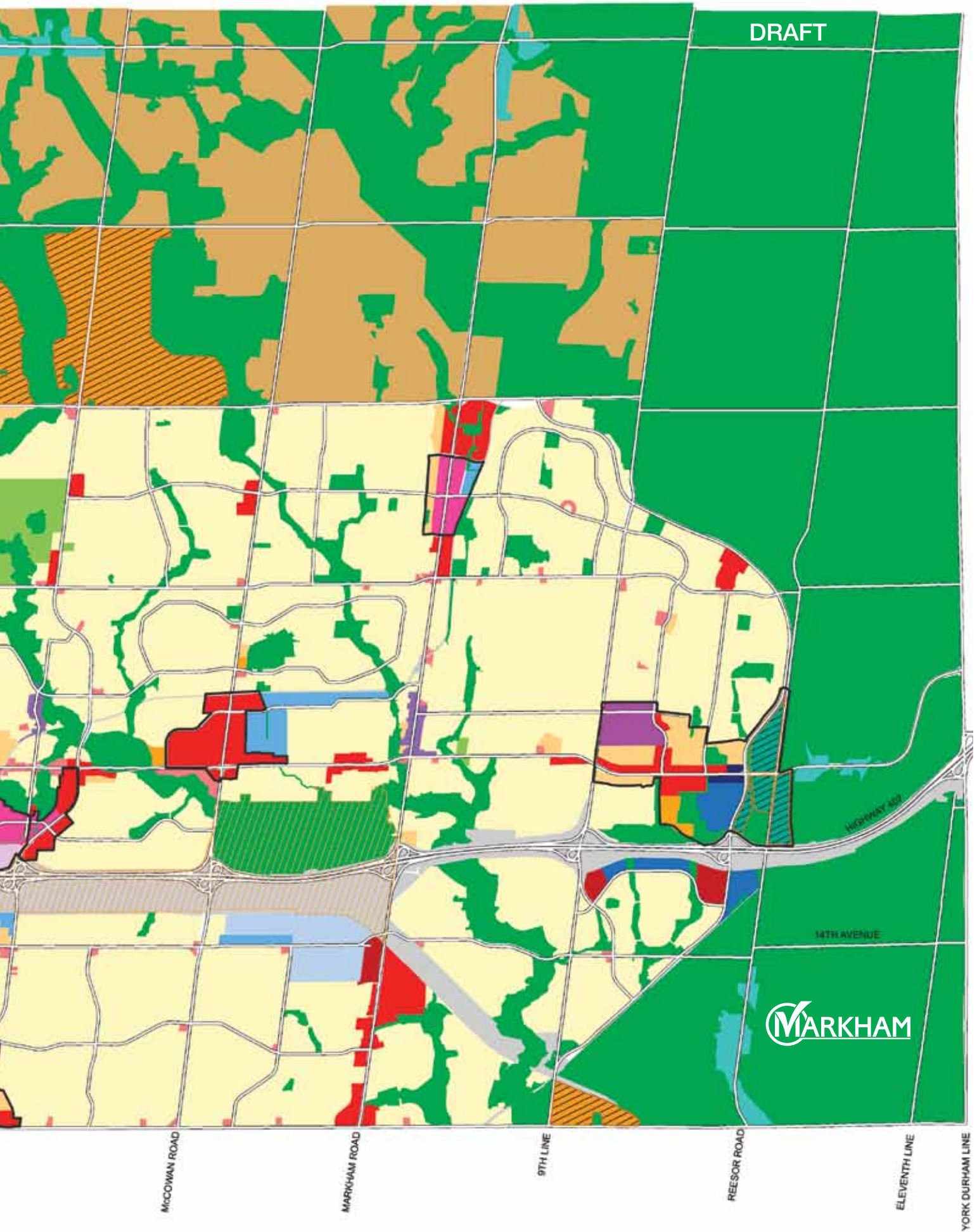
SEPTEMBER 2012

- Greenway
- Countryside
- Hamlets
- Transportation and Utility
- Parkway Belt West
- Private Open Space
- Residential Estate
- Residential Low Rise
- Residential Mid Rise
- Residential High Rise
- Mixed Use Low Rise
- Mixed Use Mid Rise
- Mixed Use High Rise
- Mixed Use Office Priority
- Mixed Use Health Care Campus
- Mixed Use Heritage Main Street
- Commercial
- Business Park Employment
- Business Park Office Priority Employment
- Service Employment
- General Employment
- Intensification Area
- Future Urban Area
- Future Neighbourhood Area
- Future Employment Area
- \* See Section 8.5.1.5 of the Official Plan





DRAFT



McCOWAN ROAD

MARKHAM ROAD

9TH LINE

REESOR ROAD

14TH AVENUE

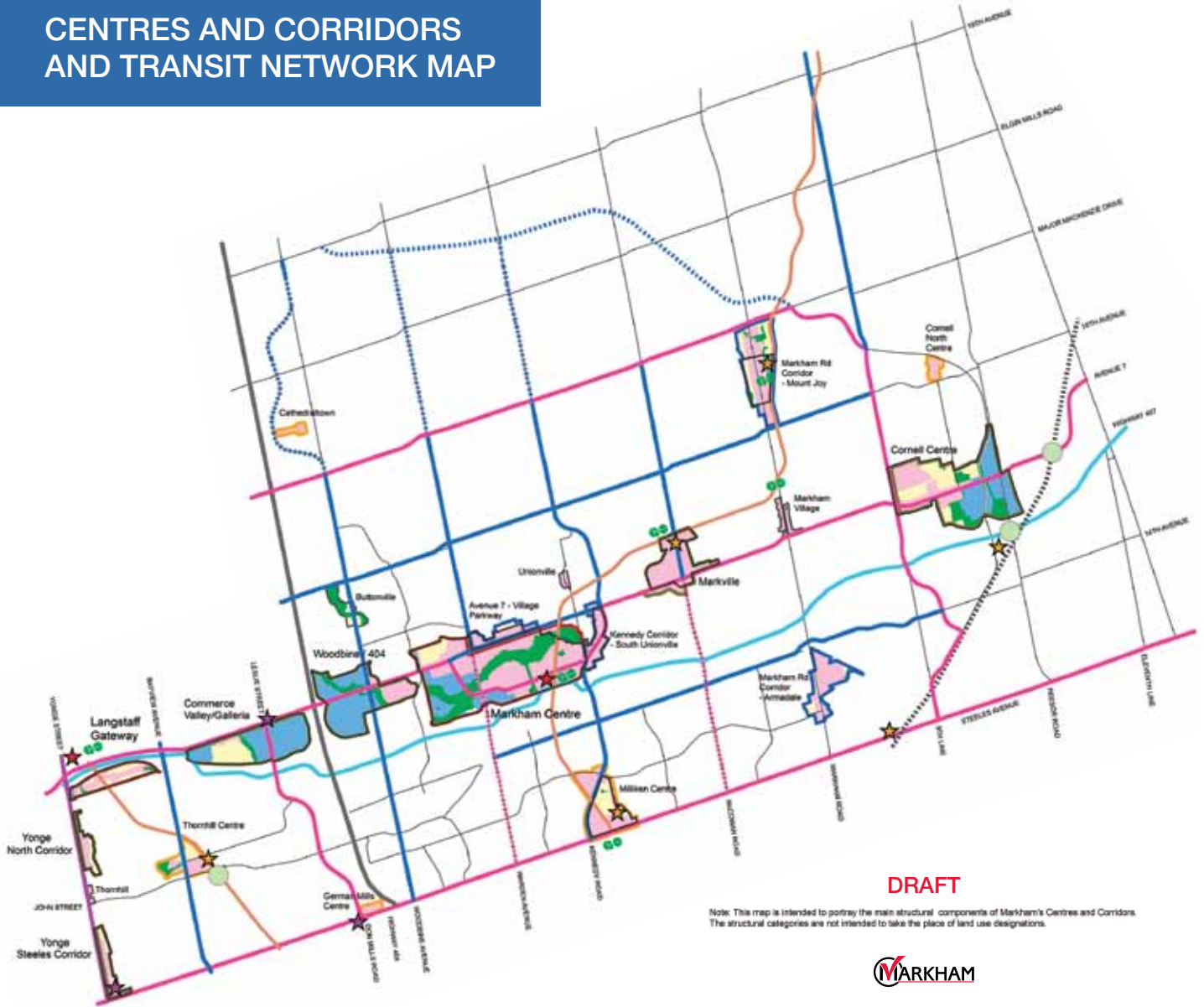
ELEVENTH LINE

YORK DURHAM LINE





# CENTRES AND CORRIDORS AND TRANSIT NETWORK MAP



**DRAFT**

Note: This map is intended to portray the main structural components of Markham's Centres and Corridors. The structural categories are not intended to take the place of land use designations.



SEPTEMBER 2012

- Greenway System
- Transportation and Utility Area
- Neighbourhood Area
- Mixed Use Neighbourhood Area
- Employment Area
- Intensification Area

- Regional Centre
- Regional Corridor / Key Development Area
- Local Centre
- Local Corridor
- Heritage Centre

- GO Rail Service
- GO Stations
- Proposed GO Stations
- Potential Commuter Rail Line
- Regional Rapid Transit Corridor
- Special Study Area Rapid Transit Corridor
- Regional Transit Priority
- Proposed Regional Transit Priority
- Proposed Yonge Subway
- Highway 407 Transitway
- Highway 404 Expressway Bus Service
- Anchor Hubs (Markham Centre, Langstaff Gateway)
- Gateway Hubs (Yonge/Steeles, Don Mills/Steeles, Leslie/Avenue 7)
- Potential Secondary Hubs (Thornhill Centre, Milliken Centre, Markville, Mount Joy, Box Grove, Fairtree East/Parkview Centre)



# Key Changes in the new Official Plan

**The new Official Plan** is substantially different in content and format than the current Official Plan.

In addition to identifying a physical structure that includes Centres and Corridors, the key changes include:

- A greater emphasis on built form in land use policies
- Identification of Future Urban Area lands
- Inclusion of urban design policies and sustainable building practices
- A greater diversity of housing types and sizes
- Consideration of community facilities/service in planning communities
- Recognition of the importance of arts and culture
- More robust cultural heritage and archaeological resource policies
- Accommodation of retail in a mixed-use multi-storey format
- Protection of employment lands





# Greater emphasis on built form in land use designations

**The Residential, Mixed Use, Employment** and Commercial designations identified on the Land Use Map are intended to provide for land uses that meet the day-to-day needs of Markham residents, including housing, jobs, education, shopping and services.

Most of the new growth in Markham will be directed to Centres and Corridors. Recognizing that most of the new development in these areas will be in the form of higher intensity development, the emphasis in controlling development has been shifting to a 'built form' approach in which height, massing and building types are the main considerations.

The Residential and Mixed Use designations assigned to lands within the Centres and Corridors provide for greater massing and taller buildings (e.g., mid-rise and high-rise buildings) than is provided for in established neighbourhoods (e.g., mainly low-rise buildings). The Official Plan land use and urban design policies require that when proposals for mid-rise and high-rise development are reviewed, care is taken to ensure that the proposed height and building massing on the site is appropriate for the surrounding area.





# Identification of Future Urban Area lands

**Lands identified as Future Urban Area** on the Land Use Map represent additional urban lands required to accommodate the projected population and employment growth for Markham to 2031. Most of the Future Urban Area lands are in northwest Markham, north of Major Mackenzie Drive.

Of the approximately 900 hectares of Future Urban Area lands, an estimated 600 hectares will be developed with new communities. The remaining 300 hectares will be developed as employment lands.

The new community lands will be planned as compact communities, meeting the density requirements of the York Region Official Plan. Specific land use designations from the categories shown on the Land Use Map will be assigned to these lands through a future planning exercise.

*Secondary plans, precinct plans and comprehensive block plans are examples of detailed land use plans undertaken for individual communities, neighbourhoods or blocks.*

# Inclusion of urban design policies and sustainable building practices

**The new Official Plan also recognizes** the contribution of high-quality urban design to the liveability of the City. Although Markham has been a leader in incorporating urban design principles and master planning for its communities through community design plans over the past number of years, the Official Plan has never been amended to incorporate a comprehensive set of urban design principles.

The new Official Plan contains a set of urban design principles that address the public realm, street and block patterns, streetscapes, landmarks and views, parks and open spaces, public art, built form and site development. These principles will be developed in more detail at a local level through the use of secondary plans, precinct plans, comprehensive block plans and urban design guidelines.

Policies regarding sustainable community design as well as the application of sustainable development practices in building and site design are also included in the new Plan. These policies are aimed at minimizing the carbon footprint of development, and work in tandem with the broader sustainability principles in other parts of the Official Plan.



## A greater diversity of housing types and sizes

**A choice of housing** of various types, sizes, tenure and affordability contributes to the liveability of neighbourhoods and the quality of life for residents. Policies are included in the Plan to broaden the types of housing being built in Markham and targets are established for the provision of affordable housing.

## Consideration of community facilities/services in planning communities

**The new Official Plan recognizes** the importance of community facilities and services such as schools, libraries, community centres, parks, arts and culture, health and social services, in achieving complete communities. Some of these services and facilities are provided by Markham, and some are provided by York Region and other providers. The new Plan includes policies for Markham to work with all providers to improve the delivery of these facilities and services, particularly in Centres and Corridors.



## Recognition of the importance of arts and culture

**As Markham continues to grow** and the population becomes more culturally diverse, the demand for community access to quality cultural programming, products, facilities and opportunities for personal cultural expression will increase. The new Plan provides policies for Markham to pursue opportunities for integrating arts and cultural facilities and programs as part of the community design and development process.



# More robust cultural heritage and archaeological resource policies

**Markham has a wealth of cultural heritage resources** and is a leader in cultural heritage conservation. The policies in the new Official Plan have been updated to reflect the City’s extensive policies and practices that have been developed over the years to ensure these heritage resources are protected. Policies have also been included regarding archaeological resource conservation, drawing from the York Region Archaeological Management Plan.



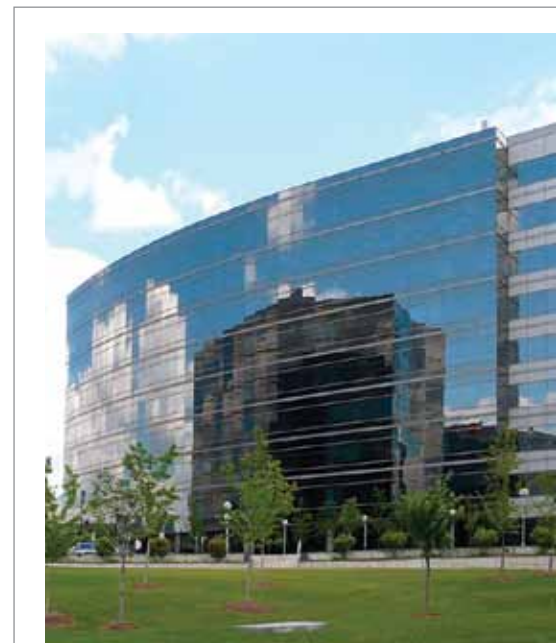
## Accommodation of retail in a mixed-use, multi-storey format

**A major focus of the new Official Plan** is the integration of land uses in order to increase accessibility and decrease travel times. In order to achieve this, the new Official Plan provides for further mixing of residential, retail and service uses within Mixed Use designations, particularly within areas that have been identified for intensification. Most retail and service uses are planned to be provided in a Mixed Use designation.

## Protection of employment land

**Provincial policy** and the York Region Official Plan require local municipalities to include policies restricting the conversion of employment lands to other land uses in their official plans. This is to ensure the continued availability of employment lands to accommodate a range of economic activity and jobs.

Policies are included in the new Official Plan that define employment land conversion and provide that development applications that would result in the loss of employment lands can only be considered by Council as part of an Official Plan Review.







# Detailed Planning for Future Urban Areas

**Once the new Official Plan** is adopted by Council, detailed planning will begin for the Future Urban Areas.

Our new Official Plan identifies a comprehensive planning framework for bringing both the 'Future Neighbourhood Area' and 'Future Employment Area' lands on-stream.

The planning will begin with the preparation of subwatershed plans for each of the watercourses that run through the Future Urban Area lands. These subwatershed plans will confirm environmental features to be protected, and address issues such as water resource management and endangered species requirements.

Once subwatershed plans are completed, other background studies, including transportation and servicing studies among others, will be undertaken to inform the preparation of a Conceptual Master Plan for the entire Future Urban Area. The Conceptual Master Plan will confirm the protected Greenway System as well as identify a high level structure of roads, neighbourhoods, mixed-use areas and employment areas within the Future Urban Area lands. The Conceptual Master Plan will also address phasing.

Once a Conceptual Master Plan is endorsed by Council, detailed secondary plans will be prepared, in consultation with landowners, the public, public agencies and other interested groups, as the basis for the approval of plans of subdivision.

*Once the new Official Plan is adopted by Council, detailed planning will begin for the Future Urban Areas.*



## Planning for Intensification Areas

**At the same time**, work will continue on updating and preparing new secondary plans for the areas of intensification and heritage districts.

Both the detailed planning exercises for the Future Urban Area and the intensification areas will continue to involve extensive consultation with the public and all stakeholders.

# We Want to Hear From You

## Next Steps

Consultation with community groups, agencies, First Nations, Métis and other interested parties will occur between October 2012 and the end of January 2013. A number of Community Open Houses will be held in November and December, and a statutory Public Meeting will be scheduled in early 2013.

Following the completion of public consultation, a revised Official Plan will be brought to Council.

Once the Plan is adopted by Markham Council, it will be forwarded to York Region for approval.

## Make Your Views Known

**Send your comments and questions to:**

[officialplan@markham.ca](mailto:officialplan@markham.ca)

**Visit our website at [www.markham.ca](http://www.markham.ca)** for more information on Markham's new Official Plan and upcoming Community Open Houses.

**Be part of our circulation list**

If you would like to be notified of future meetings, please contact Kitty Bavington of the Clerk's Department by email at [kbavington@markham.ca](mailto:kbavington@markham.ca) or call 905-477-7000, ext. 3695.

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## Links to senior government policies:

Places to Grow – Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe  
[www.placestogrow.ca](http://www.placestogrow.ca)

Greenbelt Plan  
[www.mah.gov.on.ca](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca)

Metrolinx Plan (The Big Move)  
[www.metrolinx.com](http://www.metrolinx.com)

Region of York Official Plan  
[www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)



# Notes

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