



Shared Places Our Spaces

An Overview of Markham's Public Realm Strategy



A great public realm includes a consistent and cohesive design, implementation of community responsive programming, and efficient and effective maintenance of a diverse range of public open space facilities. Together, these elements will deliver inviting, safe, clean and vibrant public spaces for residents, visitors and businesses.

Creating a public realm that encourages partnerships enriches the community experience and contributes to the overall sense of identity for Markham residents and their neighbourhoods, historical districts and business parks. It is critical to raise awareness with residents, developers, business owners, and visitors about the importance of the public realm. Creating and sustaining excitement about the importance of a strong vision for our public realm is a vital component in the creation of a sustainable community.

Defining the Public Realm

Our public realm is defined as the visible and accessible spaces, connections and buildings, which enhance public life, promote civic pride and enliven the spirit of the City. The public realm is made up of all the areas the public can enter or see including:

- Parks and open spaces;
- Pathways, bikeways and trails;
- Boulevards, streets, laneways and bridges;
- Wetlands, woodlots, meadows and environmental areas; and,
- Plazas, squares, buildings and building interfaces.

Community infrastructure is an integral part of creating a functional, memorable and sustainable public realm. It provides the facilities and services that meet the needs of residents and visitors, builds community networks and enhances the overall quality of life. Markham plays a central role in the planning and implementation of a wide range of services and facilities including:

- Parks and open spaces;
- Transportation networks;
- Libraries and community centres;
- Arts and culture resources; and,
- Fire and emergency services.

The City of Markham is dedicated to enhancing, improving and sustaining a unique, safe, vibrant and memorable place to live, work, play and invest.

Benefits of the Public Realm

The public realm builds community spirit, promotes physical activity, provides diverse environmental features and sustains our economic vitality on a daily basis. These benefits are interdependent and build upon each other.

Community recreational and cultural programs and events help neighbours keep in touch, reinforcing relationships that develop strong neighbourhoods. The public realm provides opportunities to gather and celebrate locally or community-wide through programmed and unplanned activities, including:

- Canada Day Celebrations;
- Taste of Asia;
- Farmers' markets;
- Markham's Santa Claus Parade;
- Family picnics and celebrations;
- Community volunteer ice rinks; and
- Sporting events.

Engaged and active people who walk or cycle as part of their daily routine provide 'eyes on the street,' which enhances community safety. Other activities such



as tree planting, caring for an off-leash dog park and volunteering at a community garden provide opportunities to interact with friends and neighbours. The public realm provides facilities and networks supporting a physically active lifestyle.



Investment in Markham's public realm is critical for sustainable economic growth. A vibrant, safe, diverse and interactive public realm has a positive economic impact.

Markham's Plan for a Successful Public Realm

The City's Public Realm Strategy will help clarify what needs to be done and how everyone can contribute. The strategy will:

- **Define** what the public realm means to Markham;
- **Raise awareness** of the importance of a high quality public realm and the role everyone can play to ensure its success;
- **Define the vision and goals** for Markham's public realm;
- **Provide a framework** for the delivery and maintenance of high quality public realm; and
- **Provide recommendations and actions** to enhance the public realm.



This Strategy will be used by citizens, community groups, developers, builders, utility providers, businesses, the City of Markham, York Region, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, as well as Provincial and Federal stakeholders.



Community Engagement

The consulting firm 8-80 Cities worked closely with Markham in fall 2014 to engage and educate over 700 residents. They gathered feedback on what residents like, don't like and would like to see related to Markham's public realm.

The hundreds of ideas collected were compiled, categorized and ranked, and then divided into two main categories – Software (programming spaces) and Hardware (physical infrastructure).

Markham will continue to engage residents to move public realm enhancement forward.

Vision

A place for all that is engaging, sustaining and beautiful.

Markham's public realm is the foundation which enables the spirit of the community to flourish as we grow from our heritage roots as a town to a great and vibrant city.

Markham's Public Realm Strategy is a plan to ensure that all who live, work, play, visit and invest in our city share ownership and responsibility, and aspire to create and maintain great public spaces.



Goals

1. Made in Markham Innovation and Design

Deliver high quality public realm city wide by applying innovative design standards, comprehensive oversight measures, precise construction practices and thorough inspection processes within our new development, capital and redevelopment projects.

2. Keeping Markham Beautiful

Partner with residents and businesses to maintain and beautify private and public properties.

3. Animating Our Neighbourhoods and Districts

Celebrate Markham's inclusiveness and cultural diversity by assisting in event organization and promoting community use.

4. Harmonizing Our Efforts and Sharing Our Resources

Increase funding opportunities through public-private partnerships, government grants and private donations. Enhance collaboration among Markham residents, Business Improvement Area associations, community groups, public agencies and the City. Prioritize the city-wide public realm delivery, improvement and maintenance through the City budgeting process.

5. Creating Gateways and Destinations

Showcase Markham's unique areas and destinations with beautiful spaces, great public art, memorable arrivals, and sustaining and engaging neighbourhoods and city districts.

The City of Markham is interested in your input. If you or your community group has any ideas or sites that need our attention, please call the Customer Service Centre at customerservice@markham.ca or 905-477-5530. Visit markham.ca for more information on the City's Public Realm Strategy.