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MARKHAM VOTES: Residents list freezing development, transparency, helping youth among priorities for new council

Young voters, business owners and ratepayers' group hope next council leads city forward

By **Irene Wong** Markham Economist & Sun

Thursday, October 27, 2022

Markham has a new council after the Oct. 24 election. We asked Markham residents the question “What are your expectations for your next council?” before the voting closed. Here are the voices from young voters, business owners and ratepayers’ group in Markham.

Eleni Sotirakos is a 18-year-old Markham resident and the volunteer for **Future Majority**, a nonpartisan non-profit organization for young people to use their vote.



"As a generation, we are disproportionately impacted by the issues we are facing as a society – climate change, rising cost of living, and the mental health crisis. Young people care deeply about these issues and are motivated to fight for change, including through voting.

I hope and expect our new mayor and council to take urgent and necessary action to address these issues. For instance, our new leaders can implement strong green development standards in our municipalities or increase the number of local mental health support resources.

Additionally, I believe that it is critical for our political officials to consistently consult young people on the platforms and in the spaces where they are – such as on social media and through face-to-face conversations in the community."

Ivy Chen, the general manager of Canadian Chinese Political Affairs Committee, is running a logistics last-mile delivery startup in Markham.



“I look forward to the new city council exploring opportunities to open the data related to community safety, transportation and housing affordability that drives more supervision and actionable changes for improvements.

“The pandemic drastically pushed many local businesses to undergo a digital transformation, and Markham is also at the centre of the second largest tech cluster in Canada. I expect the city council to work closely with local tech startups and institutions to offer transparency in allowing the community to actively supervise the changes the city council is working on and the results.

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“For as far back as I can recall, candidates have made impressive election campaigns promising wonderful things that eventually led to their successful elections. But who monitors their promises afterwards? How much of their promises and the changes they led for the community are collected and open to the public? I hope to have relatively timely statistics that reflect the latest developments on the issues the community is

most concerned about, which helps residents understand the changes that are taking place in their neighbourhoods. For example, if there is a rise in restaurant break-ins or if there is sudden unusual traffic congestion in certain streets, it should not take months or even years for this type of data to be released to the public. I look forward to the new city council tackling the specifics of these issues with a modern approach and promoting transparency with open data so that both the council and their communities feel a sense of commitment.”

Aileen-Willowbrook Residents Association (AWRA) is a ratepayers’ association in Markham.



The Aileen-Willowbrook Residents Association executive include: (from left to right) Sue Shillow (second vice president), Debra Hanff (secretary), Laurie Koch (director) and Louis Olivera (first vice president). Alena Gotz (president), Brian Korson (treasurer) and Eric Casper (director) are missing from the photo.

“In Thornhill, we find that our quality of life (liveability) for current and future residents is threatened by major overdevelopment and lack of up-to-date, smart urban planning for mature neighbourhoods.

“We are alarmed by the latest MZO (minister’s zoning orders) at Yonge (Street) and Highway 7 and by local redevelopment applications requesting development rights many times over their current zoning rights.

“As per Markham’s urban plan, ‘Thornhill Centre is intended to serve as an important focal point for the surrounding community providing a range of housing, employment,

shopping and recreational opportunities, as well as personal and human services.’

“However, at Thornhill Square, a pending Hazelview development application, if approved, will add too much traffic and population stress to the area’s infrastructure and services while reducing retail and commercial spaces. Overall, this will negatively impact liveability and cancel any chance of creating the local centre Markham intended.

“We expect council to show leadership by using all tools at their disposal, including a temporary development freeze through an interim control bylaw. We need a major change in the ‘processing’ of development applications in Thornhill, from a piecemeal approach towards comprehensive planning. Only smart urban planning will allow our mature neighbourhoods to transition into complete communities with sensible intensification.”

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: Reporter Irene Wong asked residents and local groups to share their hopes and expectations for the new Markham council.

Irene Wong is a reporter for the Markham Economist & Sun and YorkRegion.com. Irene speaks English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Connect with her at iwong@metroland.com.

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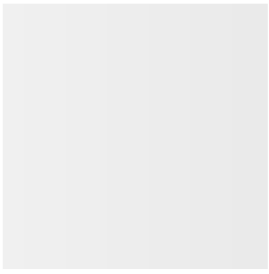
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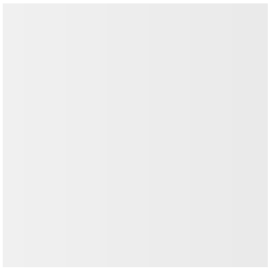
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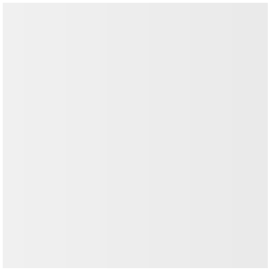
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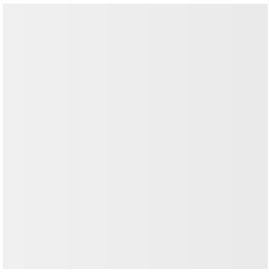
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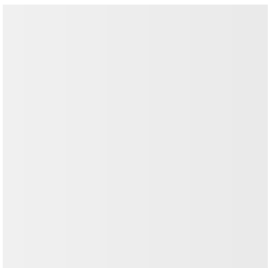


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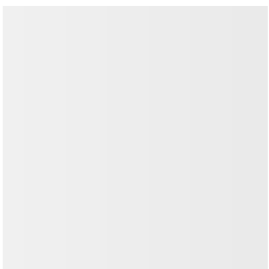
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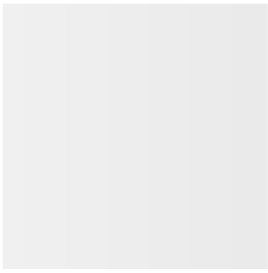
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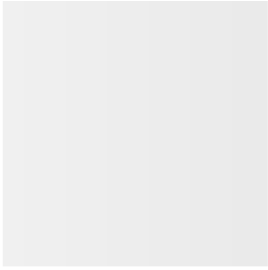


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