



MARKHAM OLDER ADULT STRATEGY

Final Report

Markham, Ontario

Prepared for The City of Markham

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Supported by:



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- Jack Heath – Deputy Mayor
- Valerie Burke – Ward 1
- Alan Ho – Ward 2
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- Karen Rea – Ward 4
- Colin Campbell – Ward 5
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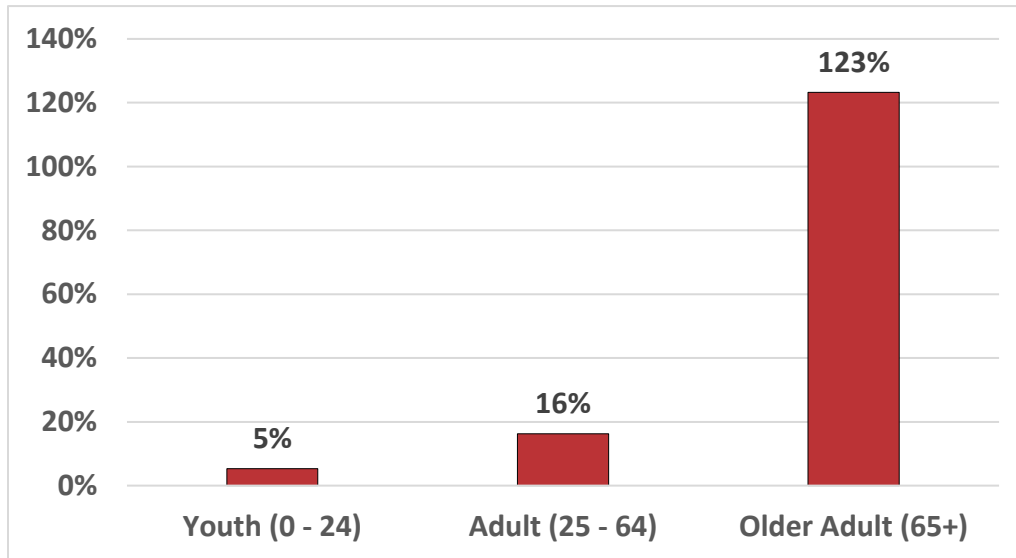
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1.0 Background

Older adults are the fastest growing segment of Markham’s population. This trend will continue over the next decade, as population growth amongst older adults continues to outpace that of youths and adultsⁱ. As illustrated in Figure 1-1, the population of older adults is growing much faster than the population of youths and adults. The population of older adults in Markham is projected to increase by approximately 123% between 2011 and 2026, while the youth and adult population segments are only projected to increase by 5% and 16%, respectively during this period.

Figure 1-1: City of Markham Population Growth 2011 – 2026



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc. based on Statistics Canada Census data and Environics CensusPlus data.

Recognizing the growing population of older adults in Markham, the City’s 2010 **Integrated Leisure Master Plan (‘ILMP’)** emphasized the importance of understanding and adapting to the changing needs of this demographic to ensure that programs and services delivered by the City meet the needs of all ages, incomes and abilities.

The ILMP recommended that the City undertake a strategy to respond to changing needs and anticipate increases in demand attributed to the growing population of older adults, as well as the corresponding impacts on the City’s financial resources and delivery of programs and services. The ILMP also recommended that the City consider the implementation of a new pricing strategy to ensure that financial assistance is available for residents who would not otherwise be able to afford municipal programs and services designed to keep residents healthy, active and fully engaged in the local community.

ⁱ Older adults refers to all residents who are 65+ years of age. However, it is important to recognize that there is a wide spectrum of ages, interests, abilities, expectations, schedules, etc. amongst this diverse and growing demographic. Youths refers to residents who are 0 – 24 years of age. Adults refers to residents who are 25 – 64 years of age.

2.0 Introduction

The Markham Older Adult Strategy ('OAS') represents a proactive policy response to better manage the growing proportion of older adults in Markham. The OAS has been undertaken to help ensure that the City is prepared to address prevailing trends and future challenges related to the aging population base in Markhamⁱⁱ.

The preparation of the Markham OAS directly supports both, the **World Health Organization ('WHO') Age Friendly Cities and Communities** initiative, and the **Ontario Seniors' Secretariat ('OSS') Age Friendly Communities** initiative, which were established to guide communities in taking steps to become more age-friendly.

Like Markham, many other municipalities throughout Canada and around the globe have recently undertaken strategic initiatives similar to the OAS to implement programs and policies that address the needs of older adults. The concept is that all citizens, regardless of age, benefit from policies and initiatives which make communities more age-friendly.

What is an age-friendly community?

According to the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, age-friendly communities promote healthy active aging by delivering policies, programs, services and spaces that help residents maintain their independence as they age. Age-friendly communities share the following principles for addressing the needs of older adult residents (Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, 2015):

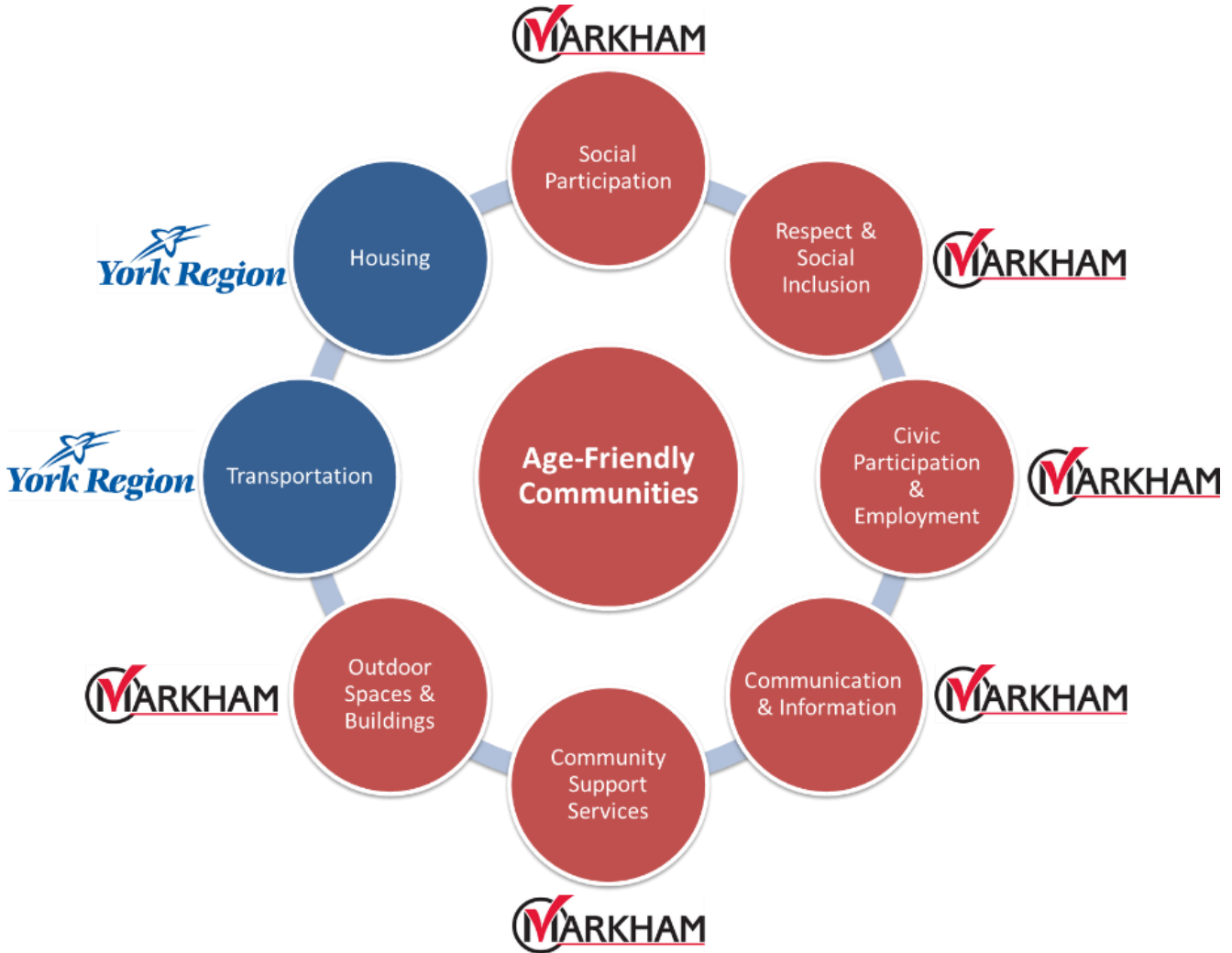
- *"Recognize the wide range of capacities and resources among older people"*
- *"Anticipate and responds flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences"*
- *"Promote the participation of older adults and encourage their contributions to all aspects of community life"*
- *"Respect decisions and lifestyle choice of older adults"*
- *"Support the older adults who are most vulnerable"*



ⁱⁱ Appendix A provides a background situational analysis relating to older adults in Markham, including an overview of current demographics, facilities, programs and services. The background situational analysis also considers prevailing trends relating to older adults and older adult strategies that have been implemented in other communities.

According to the WHO, there are eight generally accepted dimensions which support an Age-Friendly Community ('AFC') framework (World Health Organization, 2007). As illustrated in Figure 2-1, these dimensions are generally related to the programs and services delivered by local (i.e. City of Markham) or regional (i.e. York Region) government partners. Housing and Transportation services in Markham are administered by York Region, therefore, the OAS is principally concerned with the remaining six age-friendly community dimensions.

Figure 2-1: Eight Dimension of Age-Friendly Communities



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

The OAS is intended to direct the City of Markham with respect to the implementation of an innovative and inclusive approach to the delivery of municipal programs and services. The OAS will serve as a roadmap with respect to municipal policies, service delivery, design standards and community partnerships, in order to improve age-friendliness for all Markham residents. The OAS is intended to ensure that programs and services delivered by the City are appropriately aligned with the dynamic needs of older adults in Markham. The OAS is also intended to promote accessibility and equity for older adults in order to encourage Markham residents to remain physically and mentally active, healthy and engaged in their community.

Input from the local community has been instrumental in guiding the development of an inclusive approach to planning and programming for the changing needs of older adult residents in Markham.


Figure 2-2: OAS Public Workshop at Thornhill Community Centre





SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.


3.0 OAS Priorities


The Markham OAS focuses on the following six dimensions of age-friendly communitiesⁱⁱⁱ:


- 

Community Support Services are delivered by charitable organizations, religious groups, cultural organizations, private sector businesses, and other community partners. These services include health and personal care services, in-home assistance, peer-to-peer networks, etc. and are crucial to allow residents to maintain their independence and dignity as they age.
- 

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings have a major impact on mobility, independence, quality of life and the relationship that citizens have with their community. The design of welcoming, safe and accessible public spaces helps to enhance the aesthetic appeal and enjoyment of City life for all residents.
- 

Social Participation providing opportunities for participation in various leisure, recreational, educational, cultural and spiritual activities helps to ensure that citizens foster supportive relationships, establish community connections and thereby avoid isolation.
- 

Respect & Social Inclusion citizens' participation in social, civic, leisure, educational, cultural and spiritual activities is largely dependent on respect and social inclusion, both of which are influenced by factors such as gender, health status and cultural background.
- 

Civic Participation & Employment ensure that citizens have access to rewarding volunteer and employment opportunities in order to make important ongoing contributions within the local community and remain engaged in civic life.
- 

Communication & Information allows citizen to stay connected with the local community and helps to ensure that older adult residents receive clear, concise and accessible information about events and programs.

ⁱⁱⁱ There are eight dimensions of age-friendly communities as defined by the World Health Organization. However, issues related to Transportation and Housing in Markham are not addressed specifically in this study, recognizing that these services are delivered by York Region and are not administered by the City of Markham as indicated in Section 1 of this report.

4.0 Objectives

Building on the recommendations of the City’s Integrated Leisure Master Plan, the primary objectives of the OAS are as follows:

- 1) Establish a series of goals, outcomes and recommended actions based on community input to make Markham an Age-Friendly Community;
- 2) Recommend an appropriate age definition for older adults in Markham; and,
- 3) Recommend an affordable and sustainable subsidy framework for older adult programs and services.

Figure 4-1: Seniors Hall of Fame Award Recipients



SOURCE: City of Markham.

5.0 Project Support & Related Initiatives

The City of Markham has maintained a longstanding commitment to addressing the needs of older adult residents.

In 2010, the City released the **Integrated Leisure Master Plan**, which recommended that the City establish a formal plan to address the dynamic needs of older adults and proactively respond to future increases in demand for programs and services. Similarly, in 2013 recommendations derived from the annual ‘**Seniors Forum**’ organized by the Markham Seniors Advisory Committee reaffirmed the City’s ongoing commitment to addressing the needs of older adults in Markham. Based on the recommendations of both the Integrated Leisure Master Plan and the ‘Seniors Forum’ the City was committed to funding a strategic planning study focusing on older adults in Markham prior to securing Provincial funding.

Figure 5-1: Markham’s Integrated Leisure Mast Plan Cover



SOURCE: City of Markham.

Beyond the City’s initial financial contribution, additional funding for the OAS was provided by the **Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat** through the **Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant**. This funding was awarded to Markham along with 55 other communities across the Province to ensure that municipalities are prepared for the rapidly increasing proportion of older adults, and to help support the implementation of new policies, programs, services and partnerships that promote active aging (Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat, 2015). This Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant was provided to the City of Markham in 2015 in order to:

Engage local older adult residents and organizations that serve older adult interests through community consultation to complete an Older Adult Strategy, which will help Markham meet current and future service demands.

The OAS is intended to build on the City’s **2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan: Building Markham’s Future Together**. The Strategic Plan provides a blueprint for how the City will ensure its future success, which focuses on four overall goals that have guided the development of the OAS:

- 1) Exceptional Services by Exceptional People**
- 2) Engaged, Diverse and Thriving City**
- 3) Safe & Sustainable Community**
- 4) Stewardship of Money and Resources**

Figure 5-2: Markham’s Strategic Plan Cover



SOURCE: City of Markham.

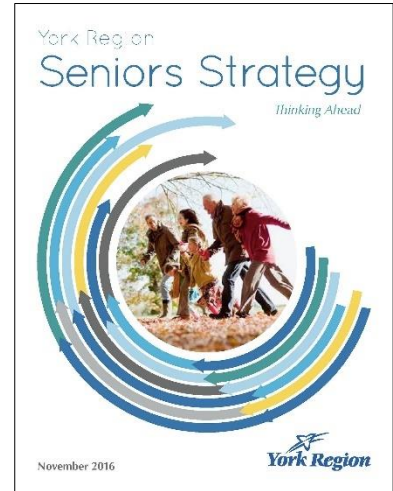
The OAS is also intended to align with work that has already been initiated by York Region to address the needs of older adults in Markham and elsewhere throughout the regional area. Issues related to Housing and Transportation Services in Markham have not been addressed directly as part of the OAS, as these dimensions are the jurisdiction of York Region, and have already been addressed as part of the **York Region Seniors Strategy: Thinking Ahead**. The OAS focuses

exclusively on the programs and services that the City of Markham is responsible for delivering to local residents.

York Region Seniors Strategy identifies four key roles for which the Region assumes responsibility (Regional Municipality of York, 2016):

- 1) **Broad Policy and Finance** – balance the needs of seniors with all residents
- 2) **Health** – Keep seniors healthier, longer
- 3) **Aging in Place** – Support age-friendly, complete communities
- 4) **Staying Safe and Connected** – Connect seniors and caregivers to the right programs and services at the right times

Figure 5-3: York Region Seniors Strategy Cover



SOURCE: York Region.

There is a considerable overlap between the key issues identified by local residents as part of the OAS and the York Region Seniors Strategy. In many respects, the community input from the OAS mirrors the York Region Seniors Strategy. For example, **communication challenges** and **barriers to participation in programs and services** are recurring issues or themes that have been emphasized as part of both the OAS and the York Region Seniors Strategy.

Figure 5-4: Older Adults Participating in Aquafit Program



SOURCE: City of Markham.

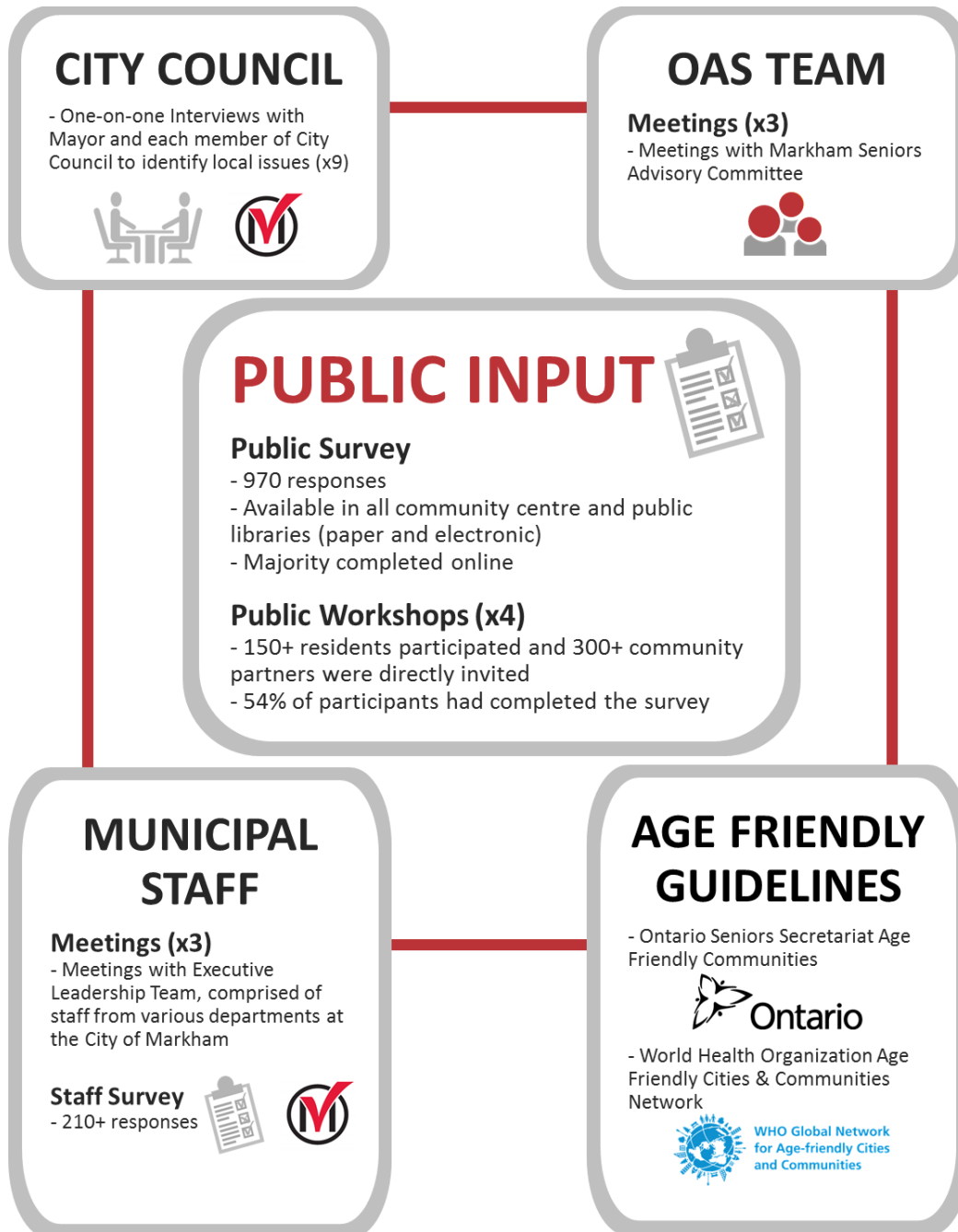
In addition to the City’s Integrated Leisure Master Plan and Strategic Plan, as well as the York Region Seniors Strategy, the OAS has drawn on many other related plans and studies including, but not limited to, the following:

<p>CITY OF MARKHAM PLANS & STUDIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2002 Markham Transportation Planning Study ● 2008 Access for Everyone: Markham’s Accessibility Strategy ● 2009 City of Markham Pathways and Trails Master Plan ● 2010 City of Markham Cycling Master Plan ● 2010 Integrated Leisure Master Plan ● 2010 Markham Diversity Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2012 City of Markham Culture and Policy Plan ● 2014 City of Markham Official Plan ● 2015 Public Realm Strategy: Shared Places Our Spaces ● City of Markham Parks Renaissance Strategy (<i>in progress</i>) ● City of Markham Seniors Advisory Committee (<i>active</i>) ● City of Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee (<i>active</i>)
<p>OTHER SUPPORTING PROJECTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide ● WHO Global Database of Age-Friendly Practices ● WHO Measuring the Age-Friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators ● Compassionate Cities: Charter for Compassion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GAATES Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments ● Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat Finding the Right Fit: Age-Friendly Community Planning ● Human Services Planning Board of York Region 2016-2018 Action Plan
<p>OTHER OLDER ADULT STRATEGIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Burlington (2016) ● Town of Caledon (2015) ● City of London (2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Waterloo (2012) ● City of Toronto (2011) ● City of Mississauga (2008)

6.0 Our Engagement

From the outset, community engagement and public input has been a fundamental component of this strategic planning process. The OAS is the result of extensive community engagement in Markham, which included input from local residents, private businesses, community groups, City staff and elected officials. The engagement framework used for the OAS has been summarized in Figure 6-1.

Figure 6-1: Overview of OAS Community Engagement Approach

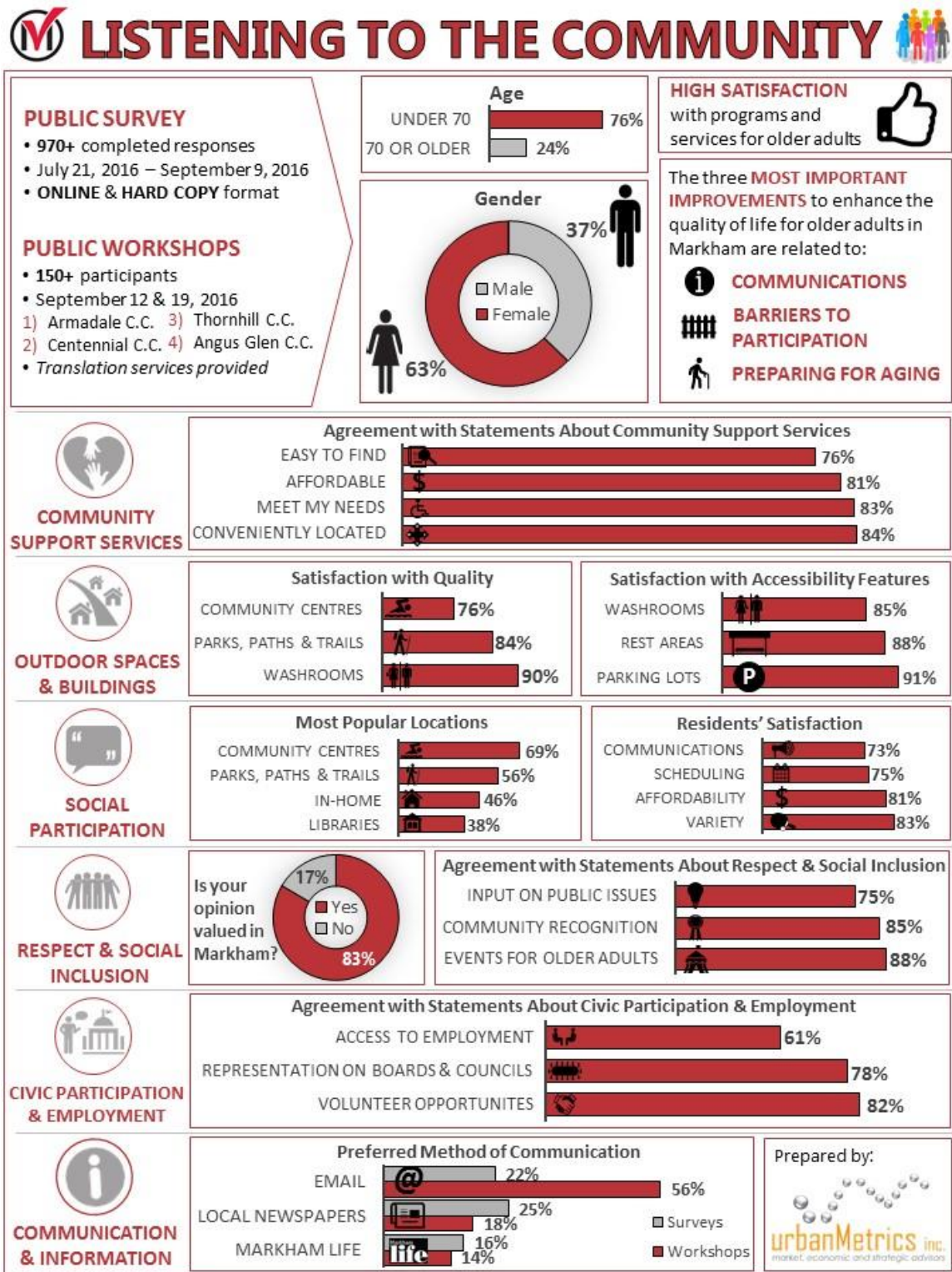


SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

7.0 Infographic: Listening to Markham Residents

Figure 7-1 summarizes some of the key themes identified by Markham residents through the public survey and community engagements workshops.

Figure 7-1: Infographic: Listening to Markham Residents



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

8.0 OAS Framework

8.1 OAS Vision

The vision statement reflects the **desired outcome of the OAS**. The vision statement presented below reflects **where Markham aspires to be in 5 – 10 years**, with respect to the delivery of programs and services for older adults.

VISION

Markham – a leading Age-Friendly Community in Canada – is responsive to older adult citizens and promotes independence, respect, innovation, diversity and community engagement.

8.2 OAS Mission

The mission statement indicates the function that will be performed by the City. The mission reflects **how the City of Markham will work towards achieving the OAS vision**.

MISSION

The City of Markham will ensure that spaces, programs and services are inclusive, flexible and accessible for older adult citizens of all backgrounds and abilities.

Figure 8-1: Older Adults Socializing & Carpet Bowling Indoors



SOURCE: City of Markham.

8.3 OAS Values

The key values or guiding principles for the OAS have been derived from the City’s Strategic Plan, and refined through extensive consultation with older adult residents in Markham. The key values that will enable Markham to realize the goals and actions recommended in the OAS are defined as follows:

- 1) **Cooperation** – establishing and reinforcing partnerships with local agencies, community organizations, private sector businesses, and citizens
- 2) **Respect** – recognizing contributions and perspectives of all residents
- 3) **Innovation** – demonstrating leadership with respect the delivery of new programs and services that meet the changing needs of local residents
- 4) **Flexibility** – adapting programs and services to address the diverse needs of all residents
- 5) **Responsiveness** – anticipating community needs before challenges are encountered
- 6) **Equity** – providing fair access to programs and services by minimizing various barriers to participation
- 7) **Inclusivity** – welcoming and valuing diversity to promote a greater sense of community belonging for all residents

Figure 8-2: Older Adult Using Computer



SOURCE: Creative Commons.

9.0 Goals & Recommended Actions

Overall, the vast majority of older adults in Markham indicated that they are satisfied with the programs and services currently available within the local community. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for improvement within each of the six OAS focus areas.

The following subsections detail the **key issues** identified by older adults in Markham relating to each of the six focus areas. To reiterate, the six focus areas for the OAS include:

- 1) **Community Support Services**
- 2) **Outdoor Spaces & Buildings**
- 3) **Social Participation**
- 4) **Respect & Social Inclusion**
- 5) **Social & Civic Participation**
- 6) **Communications & Information**



The OAS has been structured to be consistent with Markham’s Strategic Plan, as follows:

- Based on community input, an overall **goal** has been established for each of the six focus areas.
- A series of key **outcomes** and recommended **actions** have been identified to provide a roadmap for how the City will work towards each goal.
- **Performance metrics** have been identified for each goal to evaluate age-friendliness and assess Markham’s future progress with respect to the six focus areas.

The goals, outcomes and recommended actions included as part of the OAS are intended to align with the York Region Seniors Strategy and are deliberately intended to advance Markham’s commitment to the World Health Organization’s Age-Friendly Communities framework.

1 **COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES** are delivered by charitable organizations, religious groups, cultural organizations, private sector businesses, and other community partners. These services include health and personal care services, in-home assistance, peer-to-peer networks, etc. and are crucial to allow residents to maintain their independence and dignity as they age.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM MARKHAM RESIDENTS

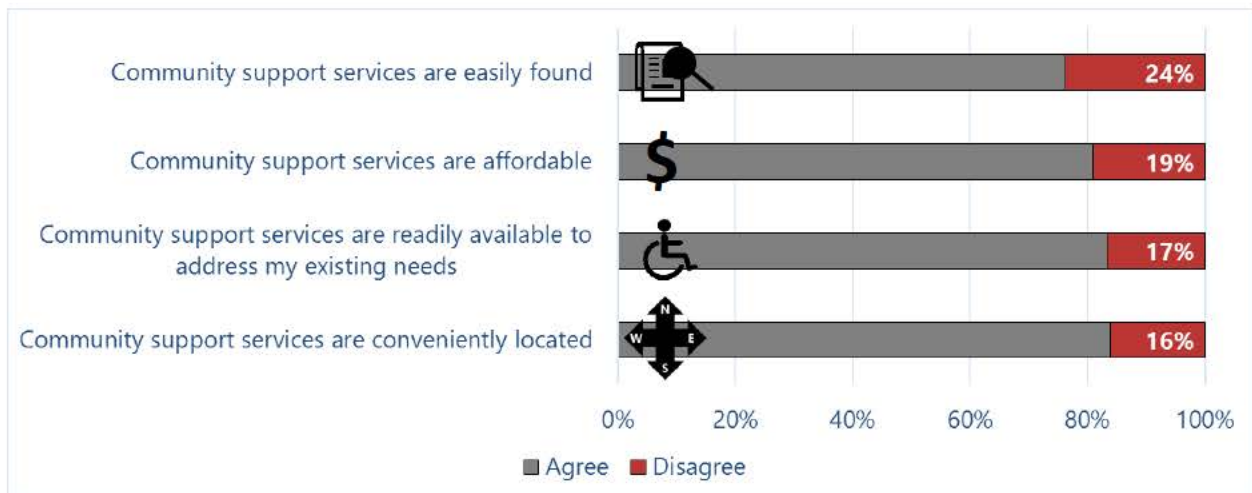
KEY ISSUES

- 1) Availability & Capacity of Community Support Services** – capacity of existing community support services is limited and demand is growing.
- 2) Awareness of Community Support Services** – general lack awareness about the range of community support services available and/or where information can be accessed.
- 3) Affordability of Community Support Services** – cost of community support services limits access to programs and services that are essential to maintain a healthy, active, fulfilling lifestyle.



- “I am not aware of the community support services available in my area. Full details about programs and fees are not accessible online – you have to call – and my hearing is not good.”
- “Very difficult to find what resources are available for older adults, particular more elderly seniors. Difficult to get assistance for companionship, assistance with errands, housekeeping, in-home physio, etc.”
- “Older adults need more support services – the services that are available are limited and are not affordable.”

Figure 9-1: Agreement with Statements Regarding Community Support Services in Markham



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc

GOAL: The City of Markham will work collaboratively with local agencies, community organizations, private businesses, citizens and other community partners to ensure that a broad range of community support services are available across Markham

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
<p>1.1 Ensuring a coordinated delivery model to improve the clarity of roles of community support services resulting in increased access for older adults in Markham</p>	<p>a. Complete an inventory of community partners that deliver support services for older adults in Markham including: charitable organizations, agencies, religious groups, cultural organizations, private sector</p> <p>b. Establish a formal process to recognize local charitable organizations, agencies, religious groups, cultural organizations, private sector businesses, etc. as being certified and accredited</p> <p>c. Assemble a database of support services available in Markham that are delivered by certified community partners</p> <p>d. Identify gaps in terms of the support services available in Markham and define roles and responsibilities for both the City and community partners going forward</p> <p>e. Advocate for a centralized delivery model for community support services, and work together with York Region and local community partners to share resources, avoid duplication and minimize service gaps</p>
<p>1.2 Ensuring that community support services for older adults in Markham are easy to identify</p>	<p>a. Establish a centralized resource for information about community support services delivered by community partners that can be accessed in the same location(s) as information about programs and services for older adults that are delivered by the City (<i>see outcome 6.1</i>)</p>
<p>1.3 Improving the affordability of community support services available for older adults in Markham</p>	<p>a. Identify and distinguish community support services that offer subsidized services for older adults in Markham for those who require financial assistance</p> <p>b. Demonstrate leadership with respect to subsidized services for older adults by implementing an ability-to-pay model that can be adopted by community partners (<i>see outcome 3.3 and/or Section 6</i>)</p>

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- Percentage of community partners included in inventory (i.e. comprehensiveness of inventory)
- Number of new partnerships established with York Region and community partners
- Establishment of centralized information resource of community support services in Markham
- Per capita subsidies issued to older adults



2 OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS have a major impact on mobility, independence, quality of life and the relationship that citizens have with their community. The design of welcoming, safe and accessible public spaces helps to enhance the aesthetic appeal and enjoyment of City life for all residents.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM MARKHAM RESIDENTS

KEY ISSUES

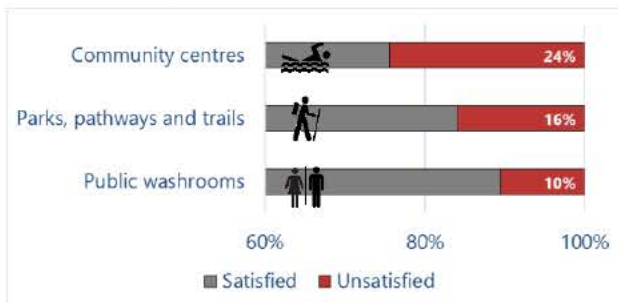
- 1) Accessibility, Quality & Coverage of Rest Areas** – more rest areas are needed throughout the City, along with enhanced design and maintenance to improve access, safety, cleanliness, etc.
- 2) Accessibility, Quality & Coverage of Public Washrooms** – more public washroom facilities are needed throughout the City, along with enhanced design and maintenance to improve access, safety, cleanliness, etc.
- 3) Infrastructure & City Facilities Upgrades** – community centres, libraries and parks, trails and pathways require modifications to improve safety and promote accessibility.



TESTIMONIALS

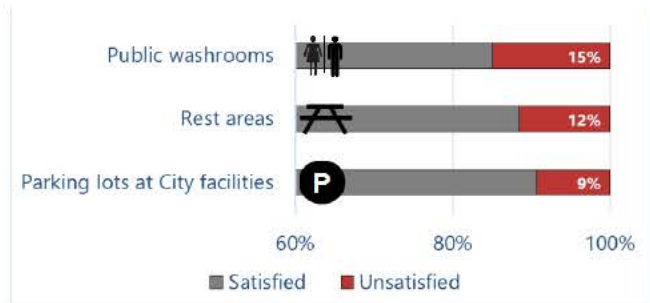
- "We need to have more rest areas and public washrooms in City parks and along trails and pathways throughout the City."
- "We need shaded rest areas and more seating at rest areas."
- "Maintenance and cleanliness of public washrooms should be prioritized to improve safety."
- "Washrooms are not always open during the time that parks are open to the public."
- "Sidewalks need to be more wheelchair accessible in all locations throughout the City (e.g. no cracks, uneven surfaces, etc.)."
- "Parking at community centres is nowhere near sufficient."
- "Improving or adding outdoor physical activity equipment in shaded areas would benefit all age groups."

Figure 9-2: Satisfaction with the Quality of Outdoor Spaces and Buildings in Markham



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

Figure 9-3: Satisfaction with the Accessibility of Outdoor Spaces and Buildings in Markham



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

GOAL: The City of Markham will ensure that there is equitable access to City roads, trails, pathways, parks and facilities for older adult residents through the implementation of sustainable community planning and infrastructure management

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
<p>2.1 Improving the quality and coverage of seating nodes (i.e. rest areas) throughout the City</p>	<p>a. Identify existing gaps with respect to the supply of seating nodes</p> <p>b. Add new seating nodes (i.e. rest areas) in parks and along trails and pathways</p> <p>c. Engage the Markham Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Markham Seniors Advisory Committee to provide input on the design and location of new seating nodes (i.e. rest areas) throughout the City</p> <p>d. Retrofit existing seating nodes (i.e. rest areas) to ensure that there is^{iv}:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shade ● Seating with armrests and backrests ● Appropriate seating height (i.e. 45 – 50 cm) ● Clear floor area for mobility aids, service animals, strollers, etc.
<p>2.2 Improving the coverage and maintenance of public washroom facilities throughout the City</p>	<p>a. Add new public washrooms at recreation facilities, libraries and community parks, building on the Integrated Leisure Master Plan, the ongoing Parks Renaissance Strategy and the City’s policy on the inclusion of public washrooms in parks</p> <p>b. Engage the Markham Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Markham Seniors Advisory Committee to provide input on the design and location of new public washrooms throughout the City</p> <p>c. Install accessibility features in all public washrooms (e.g. grab bars, wide doorways, automatic doors)</p> <p>d. Make public washroom hours of operation consistent with operating hours for City facilities and community parks</p> <p>e. Update the City’s policy regarding public washrooms in parks to ensure that there are adequate washrooms available in existing community</p>
<p>2.3 Align with Age-Friendly practices to effectively manage facilities and infrastructure in Markham for all residents</p>	<p>a. Make strategic and sustainable investments in infrastructure, building on the City’s Integrated Leisure Master Plan</p> <p>b. Ensure that all City recreation facilities and libraries meet or exceed AODA compliance standards</p> <p>c. Amend the City of Markham Zoning By-law to require more accessible spaces in parking lots based on the results of the City’s assessment of parking standards, which is being undertaken as part of the City’s ongoing Comprehensive Zoning By-law project</p> <p>d. Encourage property owners to adopt and install ‘limited mobility’ signage in private parking lots to add to the number of accessible parking</p> <p>e. Ensure that an older adult perspective is considered as part of the City’s established Site Plan Review process</p>

^{iv} Based on information from the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies & Environments (GAATES) in the Illustrated Technical Guide to the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- Percentage of rest areas that comply with design guidelines (i.e. armrests; shade; etc.)
- Distance between rest areas in parks and along trails/pathways
- Operating hours for public washroom facilities
- Number of private businesses that adopt limited mobility signage
- Minimum number of accessible parking spaces required



3 SOCIAL PARTICIPATION providing opportunities for participation in various leisure, recreational, educational, cultural and spiritual activities helps to ensure that citizens foster supportive relationships, establish community connections and thereby avoid isolation.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM MARKHAM RESIDENTS

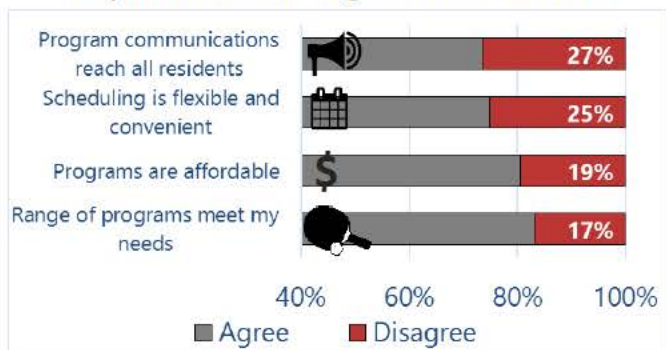
KEY ISSUES

- 1) Communication About Programs** – participation is held back by infrequent communications, incomplete or inaccurate information about programs and services.
- 2) Variety, Scheduling & Flexibility of Programs** – the wide spectrum of ages, abilities, interests, needs and expect requires greater variety of programs and services.
- 3) Affordability of Programs** – significant variation exists in the ability of older adults to pay for programs delivered by the City. Some require financial assistance, while others do not.
- 4) Demand for Programs** – demand for programs and services is increasing as a result of population growth and improving health status of older adults.



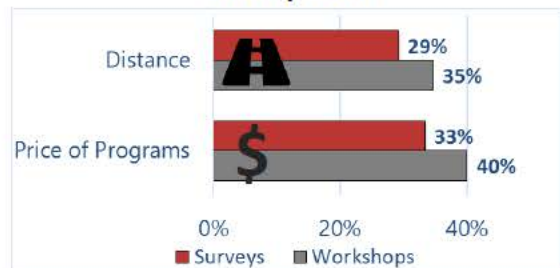
- “I don’t get out because I don’t know where to find information about programs for older adults. I don’t know where to start looking and don’t know where to go to have someone help me.”
- “Programs schedules are not ideal for people who are still working full-time.”
- “There are not enough programs that appeal to interests of both middle-aged and elderly residents.”
- “The City should encourage the existing older adult clubs to offer inter-club memberships, to improve variety, flexibility and affordability.”
- “Fitness membership fees are too high compared to private clubs. Why should the City’s fitness membership fee be equal to private clubs which offer much greater flexibility to meet different schedules?”
- “Upcoming program information does not always reach residents on time – many programs are filled very quickly.”

Figure 9-5: Agreement with Statements About City of Markham Programs and Facilities



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

Figure 9-4: Primary Barriers to Participation



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

GOAL: The City of Markham will encourage social participation and community engagement by delivering programs and services that reflect the dynamic needs and expectations of older adult residents

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
<p>3.1 Delivering clear, concise communications about new social, leisure, education and recreation programs to a diverse audience</p>	<p>a. Issue consistent, timely communications that include all key information for older adults, and indicate multiple options for accessing</p> <p>b. Ensure that information and corporate communications are consistent between print and online sources</p> <p>c. Establish a single window of information for amendments to schedules to avoid confusion</p>
<p>3.2 Increasing the variety and flexibility of social, leisure, education and recreation programs</p>	<p>a. Build on recommendations from the Integrated Leisure Master Plan to deliver programs and services that promote inclusion, access and equity</p> <p>b. Work with older adult clubs to support innovative new recreational and library programs for older adults at City operated facilities during the daytime and evening</p> <p>c. Introduce new recreational programs that cater to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Residents who are 70+ years of age ● Residents who are 55 – 69 years of age <p>d. Implement home check-up/outreach program to identify and provide support for isolated older adults</p> <p>e. Deliver specialized recreation and library programs and services for homebound residents and/or individuals with limited mobility in partnership with local agencies, community organizations, private sector</p> <p>f. Directly consult older adults with respect to activities, schedules, communications, etc. when new recreation and library programs are established</p> <p>g. Introduce more inclusive programming to appeal to specific cultural, ethnic and religious groups based on guidance and input from local cultural organizations</p>
<p>3.3 Improving the affordability of social, leisure, education and recreation programs</p>	<p>a. Allow inter-club memberships between older adult clubs in Markham (e.g. Milliken on the Move; Markham Seniors Activity Centre; Thornhill Seniors Club; Angus Glen Older Adult Club; Armadale Older Adult Club)</p> <p>b. Develop an ability-to-pay model in partnership with York Region (as indicated in Section 1.3b) to improve the affordability, particularly for those who rely on fixed incomes</p> <p>c. Encourage community partners and service clubs to deliver subsidized programming and/or all-inclusive programming to help offset the costs of programs and services for older adults</p>

OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
<p>3.4 Proactively addressing changes in demand for social, leisure, education and recreation programs</p>	<p>a. Leverage private facilities and resources that already exist in Markham to supplement City operated recreation facilities and programs (e.g. places of worship; schools; private recreation facilities)</p> <p>b. Enhance the flexibility of program scheduling to allow residents to participate in programs at the most convenient times and locations (e.g. inter-club memberships)</p> <p>c. Consider implementing new best-in-class registration systems for City programs and services to help eliminate participation barriers, increase engagement and ensure that the registration process is simple and user-friendly for older adults</p> <p>d. Evaluate the opportunity to establish an advocate or champion to support the overall delivery of programs and services for older adults in Markham and to ensure that programs and services are strategically aligned with the OAS and the WHO Age-Friendly Communities framework</p>

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- Participation rates for recreation, library, social and leisure programs by age
- Number of new cultural programs introduced for older adults
- Participation rates for recreation, library, social and leisure programs
- Annual percentage of older adults who use financial assistance on an annual basis
- Per capita subsidies issued for older adults
- Addition of new staff dedicated exclusively to older adult programming



RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION citizens’ participation in social, civic, leisure, educational, cultural and spiritual activities is largely dependent on respect and social inclusion, both of which are influenced by factors such as gender, health status and cultural background.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM MARKHAM RESIDENTS

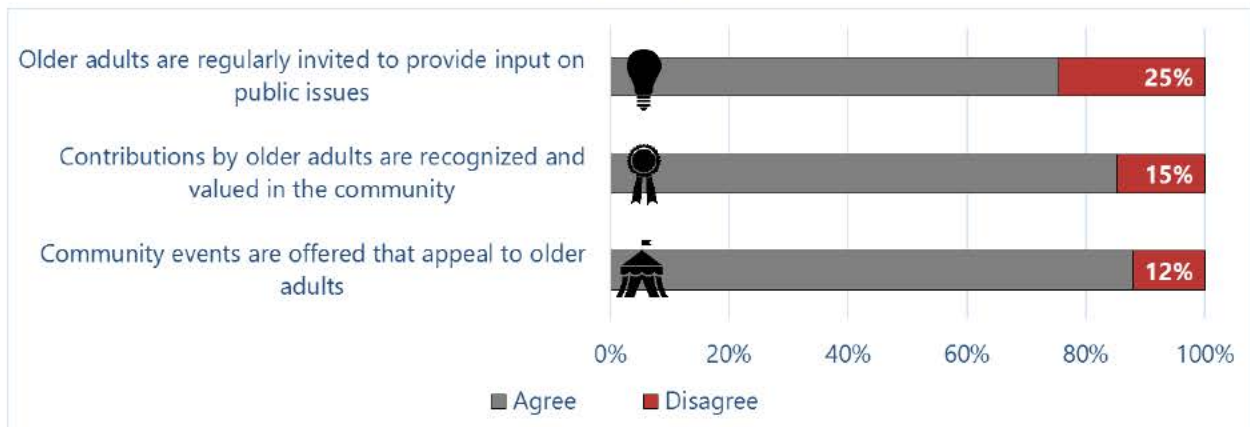
KEY ISSUES

- 1) Opportunities to Provide Input** – more opportunities to provide input on public issues are needed to ensure that an older adult perspective is considered with respect to City policies, programs, services and facilities.
- 2) Community Recognition** – perception that older adults are not always valued or appropriately recognized in Markham.
- 3) Events Appealing to Older Adults** – events organized by the City are not always welcoming and/or appealing for older adult residents.



- “My ideas and opinions are difficult to make known. I've attempt by phone and email to present ideas but received a poor response.”
- “There are times when older adults are given the chance for input, but they are not taken seriously.”
- “There is a language and technology barrier that hinders participation.”
- “Contributions that are recognized focus on those residents who are most involved and aware – however, many people don’t know awards exist in the first place.”
- “I find that major community events generally appeal to young families and younger generations.”
- “Most older adult events appeal to only a small minority population not a wide diverse population.”

Figure 9-6: Agreement with Statements Regarding Respect and Social Inclusion in Markham



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

GOAL: The City of Markham will promote respect and social inclusion for older adult residents of by embracing diversity, inclusivity and compassion, in order to create a more interconnected community

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
<p>4.1 Providing more opportunities for older adults to provide public input</p>	<p>a. Regularly collect feedback from older adults in Markham to evaluate changing needs and preferences and align with the City’s Strategic Plan, which emphasizes the importance of increased community engagement</p> <p>b. Establish an external joint planning table on age-friendly communities in partnership with other York Region municipalities as stated in the York Seniors Strategy</p>
<p>4.2 Ensuring that older adults continued to be recognized for their contributions in the local community</p>	<p>a. Continue recognizing volunteer contributions from older adults through the annual Mayor’s Seniors Hall of Fame Awards</p> <p>b. Consider renaming Mayor’s Seniors Hall of Fame Awards to Mayor’s Older Adult Hall of Fame and reducing the age requirement to include all residents who 55 years of age or older</p>
<p>4.3 Providing opportunities and environments that promote social integration, where residents can learn various cultures and celebrate diversity in Markham</p>	<p>a. Build on the recommendations of the City’s Diversity Action Plan to make events hosted by the City more welcoming and inclusive for older adult residents</p>
<p>4.4 Ensure that events hosted by the City are accessible and appealing to older adults in the community</p>	<p>a. Continue annual Canada Day Seniors Luncheon and explore opportunities to host event at a larger venue to meet demand</p> <p>b. Add new event(s) specific to older adults, recognizing popularity of the Canada Day Seniors Luncheon</p>

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- City-wide survey of older adults issued every 3 – 5 years to assess satisfaction and community needs
- Establishment of joint planning table in partnership with other York Region municipalities
- Annual attendance by older adults at events hosted by the City



CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT ensure that citizens have access to rewarding volunteer and employment opportunities in order to make important ongoing contributions within the local community and remain engaged in civic life.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM MARKHAM RESIDENTS

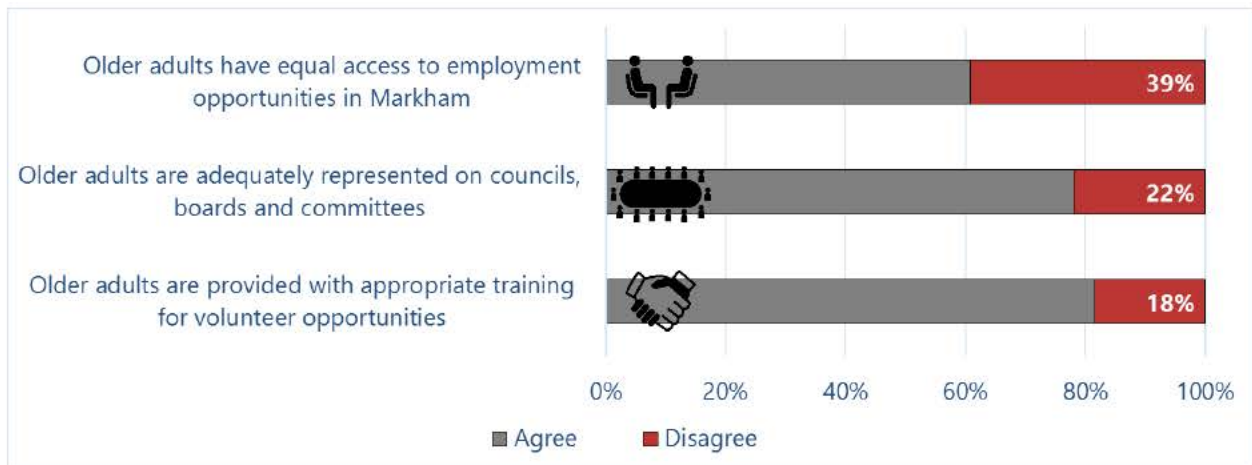
KEY ISSUES

- 1) Access to Employment & Volunteer Opportunities** – older adults are often overlooked, which limits access to meaningful employment and volunteer opportunities where skills, knowledge and expertise can be used to make a positive impact in Markham.
- 2) Representation on Boards & Committees** – greater representation on boards and committees is needed to ensure that an older adult perspective is considered with respect to City policies, programs, services and facilities.



- “I am currently unemployed ... not by choice. I want to work but I am getting the feeling that the number of years of work experience on my resume is working against me.”
- “I think age discrimination exists everywhere when it comes to employment.”
- “I retired from two years ago and would like to volunteer in Library or community centre close to home, but have been told that those opportunities are usually reserved for students who need volunteer hours for the school credits.”

Figure 9-7: Agreement with Statements Regarding Opportunities for Civic Participation and Employment in Markham



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

GOAL: The City of Markham will demonstrate leadership with respect to employment and volunteerism by identifying opportunities for older adult residents to work/volunteer with the City and community partners to make a meaningful impact in the local community

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
<p>5.1 Advocate to increase awareness of skills, knowledge and life experiences of older adults, so that older adults can make meaningful ongoing contributions to the local community</p>	<p>a. Building on the recommendations of the City’s Strategic Plan, target more volunteer opportunities for older adults by incorporating a new older adult segment into Markham’s existing volunteer management program to specifically recruit/train older adults, and connect volunteers with opportunities with the City and elsewhere in Markham</p> <p>b. Assemble a roster of volunteer agencies, service organizations, etc. where older adults can volunteer in the local community</p> <p>c. Work with local community partners, York Region and the Province to raise awareness about the skills and expertise of older adults to help eliminate age discrimination</p> <p>d. Provide education for self-employment and entrepreneurship in partnership with Markham Public Library and local economic development and business association partners</p>
<p>5.2 Ensuring that there is adequate representation from older adults on boards and committees</p>	<p>a. Commit to ensuring that the City’s decision making process always considers the components of age-friendly cities and recognizes the diverse needs of older adults in Markham</p>

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- Number of older adult volunteers working directly with the City
- Number of agencies, organizations, etc. included in City’s volunteer roster
- Establishment of age-friendly advisory committee



6 COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION allows citizen to stay connected with the local community and helps to ensure that older adult residents receive clear, concise and accessible information about events and programs.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM MARKHAM RESIDENTS

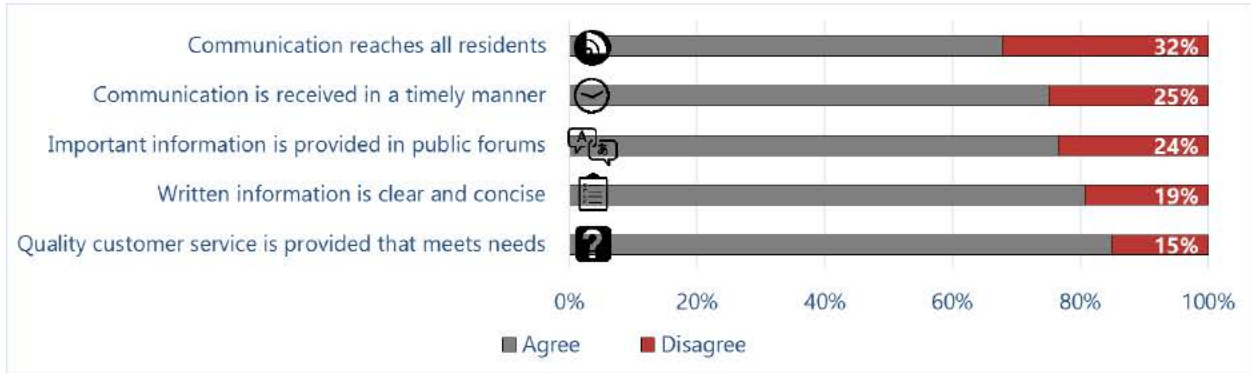
KEY ISSUES

- 1) **Distribution of Information** – general lack of awareness about programs and services available in Markham and no definitive source of information for older adults.
- 2) **Clear and Understandable Communications** – communications aren’t currently reaching all residents and communications that are delivered don’t always have pertinent information for older adults.
- 3) **Language** – Markham’s diverse population creates communication challenges with respect to language and equitable access to information.
- 4) **Customer Service** – customer service improvements are required to meet the increasingly diverse needs of Markham residents.



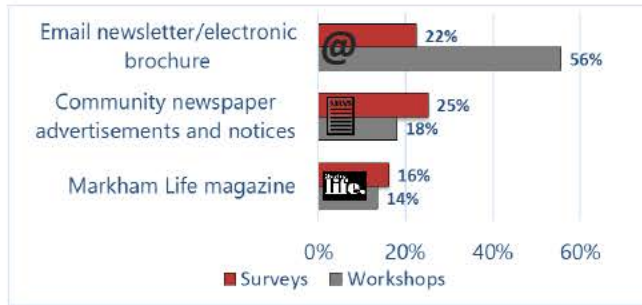
- “Existing or new programs for older adults are not advertised and communicated broadly to all residents, especially those who are not computer savvy. Markham needs to invest more in advertising and public communications so people can take advantage of programs and services.”
- “Everything is available if you are English-speaking and tech savvy.”
- “Most of us are not aware of most of the services provided by various levels of government or organizations.”
- “Program information in Markham Life is not always that clear and only arrives about a week before registration, if at all.
- “Language is a barrier and also technology. If you don't have email, information is not readily available.”
- “Where does one receive info on seniors programs in Markham?”
- “Language is a barrier to many seniors in Markham, particularly where Chinese is more widely spoken and read than English.”
- “While customer service is available, it's not always helpful when the only language that can be spoken is English at no attempts to get translation in by another employee.”

Figure 9-8: Agreement with Statements Regarding Communications and Information in Markham



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

Figure 9-9: Preferred Methods of Communication for Older Adults in Markham



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

GOAL: The City of Markham will deliver communications in multiple formats to ensure that all residents have unencumbered access to information about the programs and services available in the community

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
<p>6.1 Coordinating a centralized, interactive database of programs and services from all community partners that deliver services to older adults</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Audit existing information sources to identify directories and resources that already exist b. Establish a comprehensive, sustainable and user-friendly database of programs and services available for older adults in Markham c. Create a webpage that functions as the central municipal information resource for older adults, building on the recommendations of the York Region Seniors Strategy and the City’s Strategic Plan by transforming services through technology d. Embed a search tool as part of the City’s central information resource for older adults to simplify navigation and information searches e. Offer one-on-one customer service in partnership with the Library and/or York Region to help direct older adults to various programs and services available in Markham, including those delivered by the City, as well as local agencies, community organizations, private sector f. Establish a rating system to help identify and categorize programs and services according to mobility, activity level, etc.
<p>6.2 Connecting with local residents using communications that are clear and understandable for all audiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use accessible language and formatting in all communications b. Consult directly with community partners to help identify best practices and other successful strategies for connecting with older adults c. Actively promote translation services that are already available in Markham via the City’s Contact Centre, which currently offers information about municipal programs and services in over 150 different d. Implement a communication campaign in partnership with York Region and/or local agencies, community organizations, private sector businesses, etc. to educate residents about available programs and services, as well as what it means to be an age-friendly community e. Ensure that all information and communications delivered by the City meet or exceed AODA compliance standards
<p>6.3 Ensuring that communications and information distributed by the City are accessible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure that all communications are available in print and electronic b. Encourage information sharing and cross-promotion between the City and community partners to increase public awareness and knowledge about programs and services for older adults
<p>6.4 Ensuring customer service standards address older adult needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Prioritize customer service as directed by the City’s Strategic Plan and build on the City’s Customer Service Excellence approach by adding a specific focus on supporting older adults in Markham b. Implement new customer service training to ensure that staff are equipped to deal with the complex needs of older adults and are sensitive to the needs of older adults following the York Region Seniors Strategy

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- Establishment of database of older adult programs and services
- Delivery of communications in multiple formats
- Percentage of municipal staff that complete age-sensitivity training

10.0 Eligibility for Subsidized Programming

10.1 Current Framework

The City of Markham currently utilizes three different lenses to determine eligibility for subsidized programmed and services for older adults in Markham. These include: **age**, **income** and **ability**. However, these three lenses are not universally applied to all programs, nor are they consisted from one City department to the next.

As illustrated in Figure 10-1, some City departments define older adults as residents who are 65+ years of age, while others include residents who are 60+ years of age, or 55+ years of age. For most existing City programs and services for older adults, age is currently the primary determinant of eligibility discounts and subsidies for Markham residents.

Figure 10-1: Existing Age & Eligibility Requirements for Subsidized Older Adult Programs in Markham

Program or Service	Age	Eligibility Requirements	Subsidies
Recreation	55+	All residents 55+ years of age	Access to Older Adult Clubs based on annual membership (cost varies by club)
	65+	All residents 65+ years of age	30% discount on adult fees
Windrow Removal	60+	All residents in the household must be 60+ years of age (and/or physically unable to clear snow as confirmed by a doctor)	Snow windrow removal assistance is provided at no cost
Library	65+	All residents 65+ years of age	Most library services are provided at no cost; 30% discount on adult fees for paid-programming
Waste Collection & Assisted Recycling	n/a	All residents in the household must have a physical disability that prevents them from carrying materials to the curb as confirmed by a doctor	Assisted recycling collection is provided at no cost
Pet Licensing	65+	All residents 65+ years of age	50% discount on standard animal fees
Property Tax	55+	Low-income residents 55 - 64 years of age	Total or partial deferral of property taxes, with deferred and outstanding taxes not exceeding 75% of the assessed value of the property
	65+	All residents 65+ years of age	
Culture	65+	All residents 65+ years of age	15% discount on selected tickets at Flato Markham Theatre; 25% discount on all art programs at Varley Art Gallery; and discounted admission to the Markham Museum

SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.



The City of Markham, including municipal staff and elected officials, recognize the inconsistencies within the current approach to delivering discounted programming to older adults. As such the City has requested that the OAS consider the need for developing a more manageable and consistent framework for implementing subsidies for older adults in Markham on a go-forward basis.

Given the growing share of Markham’s population represented by older adults, an eligibility model that universally delivers subsidies based on age, and age alone is simply not feasible going forward. From a policy perspective, the pervasive use of deep discounts for people of a certain age is quickly proving to be an unsustainable delivery model for programs and services delivered by governments of all types.

10.2 Age

In order to maintain consistency, it is recommended that the City of Markham harmonize **a uniform definition of older adults** across all City departments to **all residents who are 65 years of age or older**.

10.3 Subsidy

In order to alleviate the growing financial strains of delivering City-run programs and services, and to help ensure that all households have equitable access – regardless of age, income, or other factors – the City of Markham should introduce an **ability-to-pay model**, whereby, **eligibility for subsidized services would be determined based on residents’ needs and financial capacity to pay for programs and services**.

10.4 Rationale

Without question, there will be greater demand for municipal programs and services in future years, given the rapid pace of growth amongst older adults in Markham. As a result, reforms will be required in order to maintain existing standards of excellence for the delivery of City programs and services.

Harmonizing the age definition of older adults across all departments at the City of Markham, at 65+ years of age, would help to minimize confusion and improve the clarity of communications for older adults. Furthermore, 65+ is consistent with the social policy framework defined in the York Region Seniors Strategy. Using a 65+ age definition for older adults would also be consistent with other nearby municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (e.g. Vaughan), which have recently undertaken strategic planning exercises related to older adults.

Recognizing the rapid pace of growth amongst the older adult population in Markham (see Figure 1-1), there will undoubtedly be an across-the-board increase with respect to the total demand for

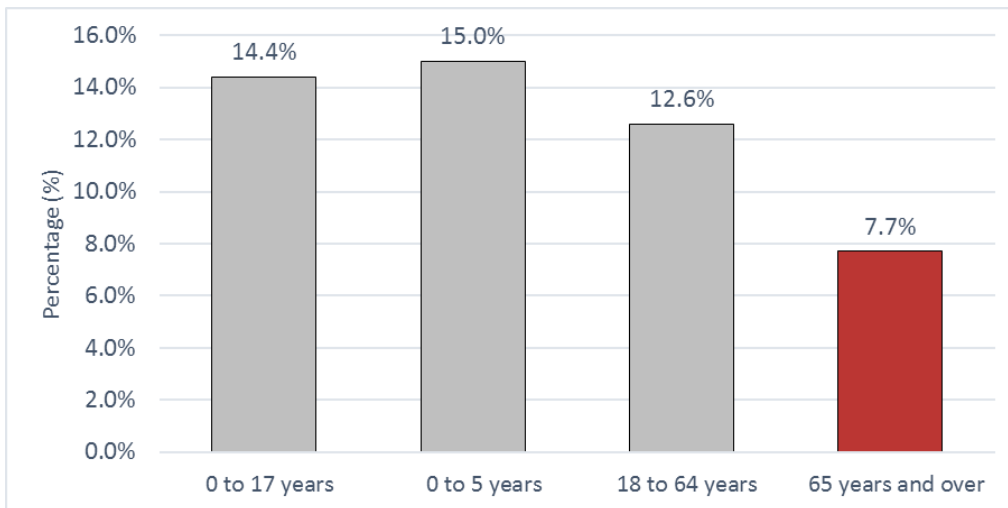
municipal programs and services going forward. However, municipal resources are limited and future growth rates amongst older adults will greatly outpace future budget increases in Markham. Therefore, some reforms are necessary to ensure that the City of Markham can continue to deliver vitally important programs and services to all residents, in all wards and in all neighbourhoods. Establishing a uniform age definition for older adults at 65+ years of age for all City departments would help to ensure City of Markham maintains its commitment to excellence in service delivery.

Establishing an ability-to-pay model would also help to maintain the City’s current exceptional service delivery standards, without placing additional financial burden on all taxpayers in Markham, for example, through an increase in property taxes. Instead residents with the ability-to-pay for programs and services would assume greater financial responsibility for paying for City programs and services in which they choose to participate. Establishing an ability-to-pay model would help to open access to the greatest number of Markham residents, by ensuring that the City is prioritizing those with the greatest need. It would also help to ensure that the City does not impose an unfair financial burden on low income residents with limited financial means.

Stewardship of money and resources is one of the four primary goals of the City’s Strategic Plan. The City’s objective is to “*demonstrate sound, transparent and responsible financial and resource management to mitigate risks while ensuring efficient and effective service delivery.*” To support the direction of the Strategic Plan, the City must now consider alternate ways of determining eligibility for subsidized services for older adults, in order to optimize resources and balance the needs of all local residents, without sacrificing the quality of programs and services.

Furthermore, today’s older adults are generally better-positioned for retirement compared to previous generations. For example, the prevalence of low-income for older adults in Markham is considerably lower than both youths and adults, as illustrated in Figure 10-2.

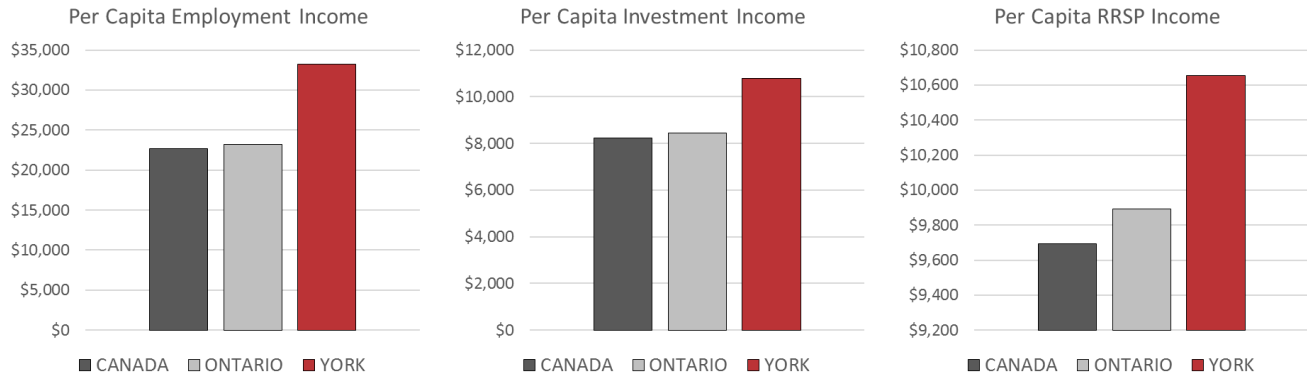
Figure 10-2: Prevalence of Low-Income by Age in Markham



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc. based on 2016 Statistics Canada Census data.

Higher incomes, better long-term saving habits, and accelerated property values, particularly in urban markets have helped reduced the incidences of poverty among Canadians over the age of 65 (Kitchen, 2015). For example, the average per capita employment income, investment income and RRSP income for older adults in York Region is much higher than Ontario or Canada, as illustrated in Figure 10-3.

Figure 10-3: Primary Income Sources



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc. based on 2011 National Household Survey data (2016 Statistics Canada Census data unavailable at time of study).

Implementing an ability-to-pay model would be consistent with input gathered from Markham staff and residents, it would also support the existing policy framework emerging in both in Markham and York Region. Like Markham, York Region is moving towards the implementation of an ability-to-pay model for subsidized programming for older adults, following the lead of other municipalities in Ontario (e.g. Vaughan, Mississauga, Milton), in an effort to optimize limited resources. Given that many programs and services for older adults in Markham are delivered by York Region (e.g. Transit and Housing) and recognizing that the OAS is intended to align with the recommendations of the York Region Seniors Strategy, an ability to pay model should also be implemented in Markham going forward to maintain consistency and avoid confusion^v.

Establishing an eligibility model based on residents’ ability-to-pay for programs and services would also help to demonstrate Markham’s commitment to ensuring a fiscally prudent and efficient municipality, as directed by the City’s Strategic Plan. For example, the transition to an ability-to-pay model would help to improve the sustainability of municipal services in Markham and support recommendation #155 from the City’s ILMP, which indicates that the City of Markham should offer financial assistance for older adults who cannot afford to participate in various programs and services. The implementation of an ability-to-pay model would also directly support

^v See Outcome 1.3 and Outcome 3.3 in Section 8 of this report for recommendations with respect to the methodology for determining eligibility for subsidizes services for older adults in Markham.

Recommendation #104 from the City’s ILMP, which prioritizes establishing a new subsidy program to reduce barriers to participation (e.g. affordability, access, etc.).

Similarly, implementing an ability-to-pay model would be consistent with the Human Services Planning Board of York Region 2016-2018 Action Plan and the Fair Access Partnership^{vi}, which focuses on increasing access to recreational and cultural programming for low and moderate income residents by emphasizing collaboration to provide more responsive services and supports.

^{vi} The Fair Access Partnership is a collaborative initiative, involving York Region, the York Catholic District School Board (‘YCDSB’), the York Region District School Board (‘YRDSB’) and all nine municipalities that comprise York Region.

11.0 Conclusions & Next Steps

The growing size of Markham’s older adult population base will undoubtedly have implications with respect to the demand for, and delivery of, programs and services across the City. Recognizing the ongoing demographic shift that is already well underway, the OAS is intended to provide a coordinated and proactive strategy for addressing the needs of the City’s older adult residents.

The OAS provides a roadmap for how Markham will meet current and future service demands with respect to older adults. As need and abilities change going forward, it will be important to encourage widespread participation in unique and innovative ways. The City will need to adapt to modify the existing program offerings to ensure that local residents stay active and connected. It will also be important to continually monitor demographics, preferences and prevailing trends amongst older adults to ensure that the programs and services available in the local community accurately reflect the diverse and changing needs of Markham residents. As part of the OAS, it will also be necessary to monitor future progress to ensure that Markham remains committed to promoting age-friendliness.

This report summarizes the background analysis, community engagement and strategic planning stages of the OAS. The next step is implementation. Working with representatives from City departments, various community partners and local residents, the OAS will be put into action throughout the remainder of 2017. The implementation stage will be used to confirm available resources and to establish timelines for the execution of recommended actions over the next 5 – 10 years.

Effective communication will be the central pillar upon which the successful implementation of the OAS will depend. Communication must be delivered in formats that promote inclusion and equitable access to programs and services, recognizing the increasingly diverse nature of the local population.

Collaboration with York Region will also be essential to ensure successful implementation of the OAS, recognizing that many crucial services for older adults in Markham are administered by the Region and thereby impact the City’s ability to deliver innovative programs and services that meet the needs of local older adults. For example, transportation and housing, both of which are administered by York Region, are crucial services that impact the quality of life for Markham residents and influence the extent to which older adults remain active and engaged in the local community as they age.

Working in partnership with York Region will also be particularly important to establish a consistent framework for financial assistance based on residents’ ability to pay for programs and services. Implementing an ability-to-pay model for financial assistance in Markham will help to ensure consistency going forward. Establishing an eligibility model based on residents’ ability to pay for programs and services will help

Figure 11-1: Partnering With York Region



SOURCE: urbanMetrics inc.

to demonstrate that Markham is committed to ensuring a fiscally prudent and efficient municipality, as outlined in the City’s Strategic Plan.

As part of the implementation stage, specific initiatives will be identified by various departments within the City, building on the recommendations of the OAS with respect to municipal policies, service delivery, design standards, etc. Going forward, the OAS will also serve as a vital tool to assist the City with outreach and the establishment of new partnerships with public, private and community organizations to deliver programs and services that are responsive to the needs of older adult residents in Markham.

Figure 11-2: Older Adult Reading With Child



SOURCE: City of Markham.