



# Markham is More:

Markham's Economic Development  
and Culture Strategy

2023 to 2027





# Mayor's Message

On behalf of Council, I am proud to present the City of Markham's 2023 to 2027 Economic Development and Culture Strategy. The strategy lays out a five-year roadmap that will guide the work of staff and community stakeholders to grow Markham's economy on a foundation of arts, culture, and innovation.

Arts and culture play an important role in Markham's economic growth – and developing an economic development strategy that does not prioritize their contribution to the community's quality of life and success would be doomed to fail. Investment follows talent – tech talent is located where educational opportunities and interesting job prospects are found, and in welcoming communities that provide a strong quality of life.

Both a quality of life indicator and contributor, a thriving arts and culture community indicates an engaged and innovative community. As a contributor, arts and culture provide a way to connect, generate economic opportunities, celebrate and shape a community's cultural identity.

This is why the City, already home to Canada's largest semiconductor cluster and the country's second-largest concentration of tech companies, developed an integrated economic development and culture strategy – because we need to lead with the importance of quality of life in our bid to continue to attract and nurture the talent we need to secure investments from global and local technology companies.

We are lucky in Markham, as our economic strengths and leadership are drawn from a talent pool that embraces creativity and innovation to drive solutions that address market gaps and societal challenges. Our goal through this strategy is to continue to foster this creativity and ensure Markham is at the forefront of the Canadian and global innovation community.

Our team at the City of Markham looks forward to working with its community partners, businesses, creatives and residents in implementing this strategy. Its implementation and success will depend on all of us working together to maintain and enhance Markham's quality of life, while providing a nurturing environment for creativity and innovation.

Regards,  
Mayor Frank Scarpitti



# Land Acknowledgment

We begin this strategy by sharing and acknowledging the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples and their commitment to stewardship of the land.

We acknowledge the communities in circle. The North, West, South and Eastern directions, and Haudenosaunee, Huron- Wendat, Anishnabeg, Seneca, Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit peoples.

We share the responsibility with the caretakers of this land to ensure the dish is never empty and to restore relationships that are based on peace, friendship, and trust.

**We are committed to reconciliation, partnership and enhanced understanding.**





# Acknowledgments

The City of Markham's Department of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship gratefully acknowledges the insight and support of the organizations and individuals who contributed to this strategy and recognize that this is the beginning of a broader conversation.

## **City of Markham Economic Development and Culture Committee**

Mayor Frank Scarpitti  
Alan Ho, Regional Councillor and Chair  
Amanda Collucci, Ward 6 Councillor and Vice-Chair

## **City of Markham project team**

Chris Rickett, Director of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship  
Lee Williams Boudakian, Manager, Economic Development  
Huyen Hare, Senior Business Development Officer  
Mislal Balogun, Senior Business Development Officer  
Tiffany Mak, Manager, Small Business Centre  
Joshua Mak, Economic Development Coordinator  
Carrie Colangelo, Research and Marketing Coordinator  
Eric Lariviere, Manager, Flato Markham Theatre  
Scott Hill, Business and Rental Manager, Flato Markham Theatre  
Andrea Carpenter, Manager, Markham Museum  
Janet Reid, Curator, Markham Museum  
Niamh O'Laoghaire, Manager, Varley Art Gallery  
Anik Glaude, Curator, Varley Art Gallery  
Renee Zhang, Manager, Community and Corporate Events

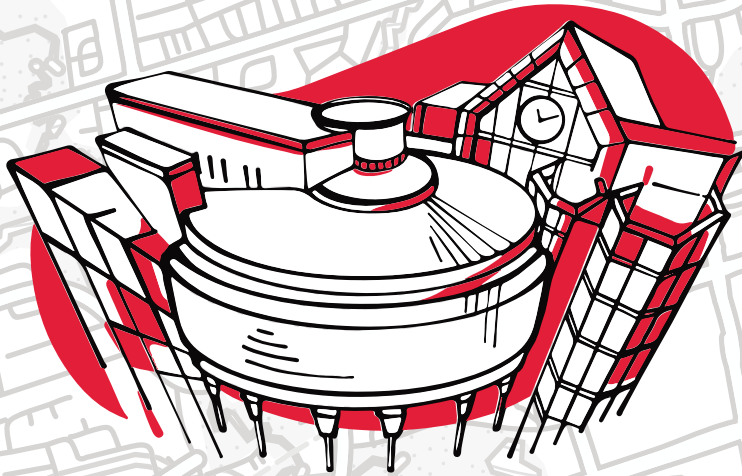
## **Deloitte project team**

Paul Blais, Managing Director  
Chris Bandak, Managing Director  
Evelyn Paul, Manager  
Simon Webb, Manager  
Rebecca Taylor, Senior Associate  
Jose Rodriguez, Senior Associate  
Xiao Xiao, Senior Associate  
Noah Fast, Analyst

## **Nordicity project team**

Mila Dechef-Tweddle, Director  
Megan Lynch, Manager  
Natalia Holeksa, Senior Consultant  
Lianne McRadu, Senior Analyst





# MARKHAM IS MORE



City of Markham  
Department of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship


Markham Civic Centre  
101 Town Centre Blvd.  
Markham, ON L3R 9W3  
Canada

Tel: 905.475.4878  
email: [edoinfo@markham.ca](mailto:edoinfo@markham.ca)

[MarkhamBusiness.ca](http://MarkhamBusiness.ca)

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**The 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy integrates economic growth with the preservation and enhancement of Markham's cultural vibrancy, leveraging our synergies to enable a more resilient, vibrant, sustainable and prosperous community.**



View from the Markham Civic Centre grounds looking toward Highway 7





# Markham is More: The 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy

The City of Markham is a vibrant community, imbued with innovation, creativity and civic pride. The city has one of the most diversified economies in Canada – a product of innovation, the quality of its labour force, and the efforts of Markham’s business community and institutions. Markham’s inspiring entrepreneurs, idea makers and leaders show how culture and economic development intersect with talent and creativity – making the city a perfect place to “live, work, explore and play!”

The City of Markham continues to build on past economic development successes and is boldly pursuing a visionary agenda that thrives at the crossroads of arts, culture and innovation.

As home to Canada’s largest semiconductor cluster, a new urban downtown that will welcome York University’s new campus and more than 170,000 residents, and plans to create the Markham Innovation Exchange (MiX) with its 1,900 acres of employment lands dedicated to next generation hardware manufacturing, Markham is witnessing major advancements that will continue to transform the community.

The city is a prominent high-technology hub within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) due to the presence of IBM’s Canadian headquarters and its research and development lab, AMD, Qualcomm, GM’s Canadian Technical Centre, GE Grid Solutions, Johnson and Johnson, Honda Canada, and Huawei; all among more than 240 international companies that call Markham their Canadian home. These investments have come from around the world and



have allowed local leaders to focus on continued economic resilience through innovation, collaboration, research and entrepreneurship. Coupled with City Council's pro-business leadership and a focus on arts and economic development through one central municipal department, Markham has created the conditions necessary to promote innovation and economic activity, add vibrancy to the city's centres, and enhance community development and placemaking.

## **Aligning economic development and culture**

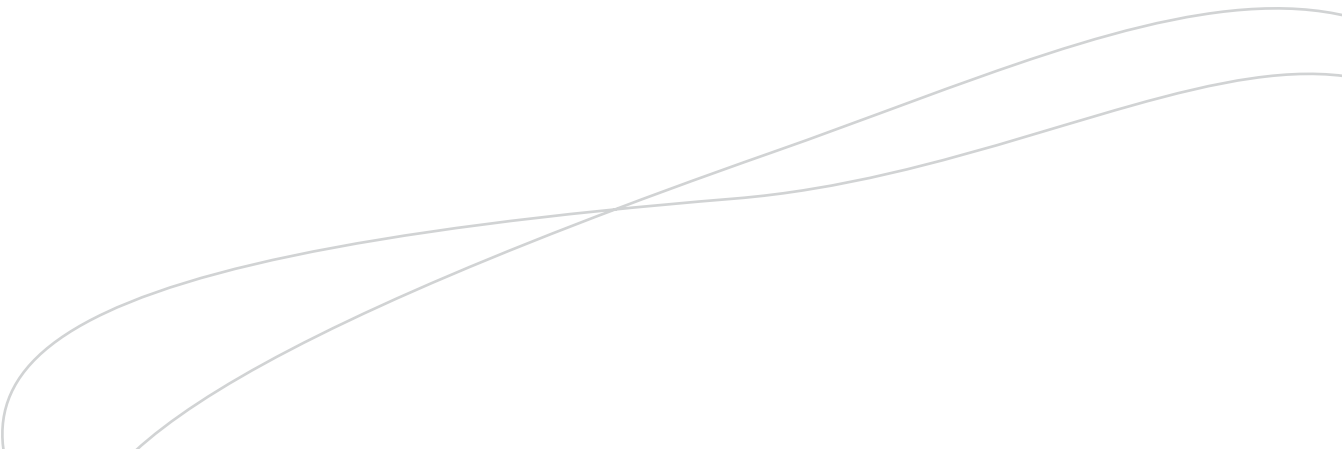
The City of Markham recognizes that economic development and culture are interconnected and fundamental drivers of thriving cities.

Arts and culture are central factors in how communities create identity, belonging, social resilience and civic pride. Cultural infrastructure and placemaking shapes civic engagement, community formation and quality of life. These are foundational to creating an environment where businesses and residents thrive.

Creativity is integral to innovation and the future of business. Creativity fuels everything from envisioning business solutions through to reimagining business models and practices amidst changing business landscapes. An economic development strategy that prioritizes the arts, culture and creativity is working toward building a complete and inclusive community with a thriving and continuously evolving business ecosystem.

Aligning economic development and culture can take many forms, including scaling cultural programs and services to match current needs and future population growth, positioning the promotion of cultural institutions and festivals alongside tourism, supporting artists as entrepreneurs and small business owners, growing investment in the creative industries, and preserving and interpreting historic landmarks. The arts and creative industries such as visual art, performing arts, music and film generate economic activity and create jobs while contributing to innovations that fuel other economic sectors, such as technology and manufacturing. Levers for growth can involve providing funding and resources to support artists and entrepreneurs, as well as creating spaces and events to highlight their work.

It is important to measure the benefits of arts and culture, which are not intangible but foundational to the success of complete and economically diverse communities. The City's role is to address the barriers that prevent a thriving creative and economic landscape by making investments in necessary infrastructure and resources, by creating and supporting programs and initiatives that support creativity and innovation, and by helping facilitate the cross-pollination and collaboration that build community.



## Markham's opportunity for economic development and culture growth

To fully realize Markham's potential as a regional growth and cultural hub, and a global player within target sectors, coordinated efforts are necessary. A municipal response from the top-down is needed, along with collaborative partnerships with businesses, artists, creators, non-profits, post-secondary institutions and community members. This will ensure that arts, culture and innovation form the foundation for Markham's economic development.

Markham's economic development and cultural opportunity is found at the intersection of its service delivery areas, which include foreign direct investment (FDI), business retention and expansion (BR&E), innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, arts and culture, talent and workforce, and community economic development<sup>1</sup>.

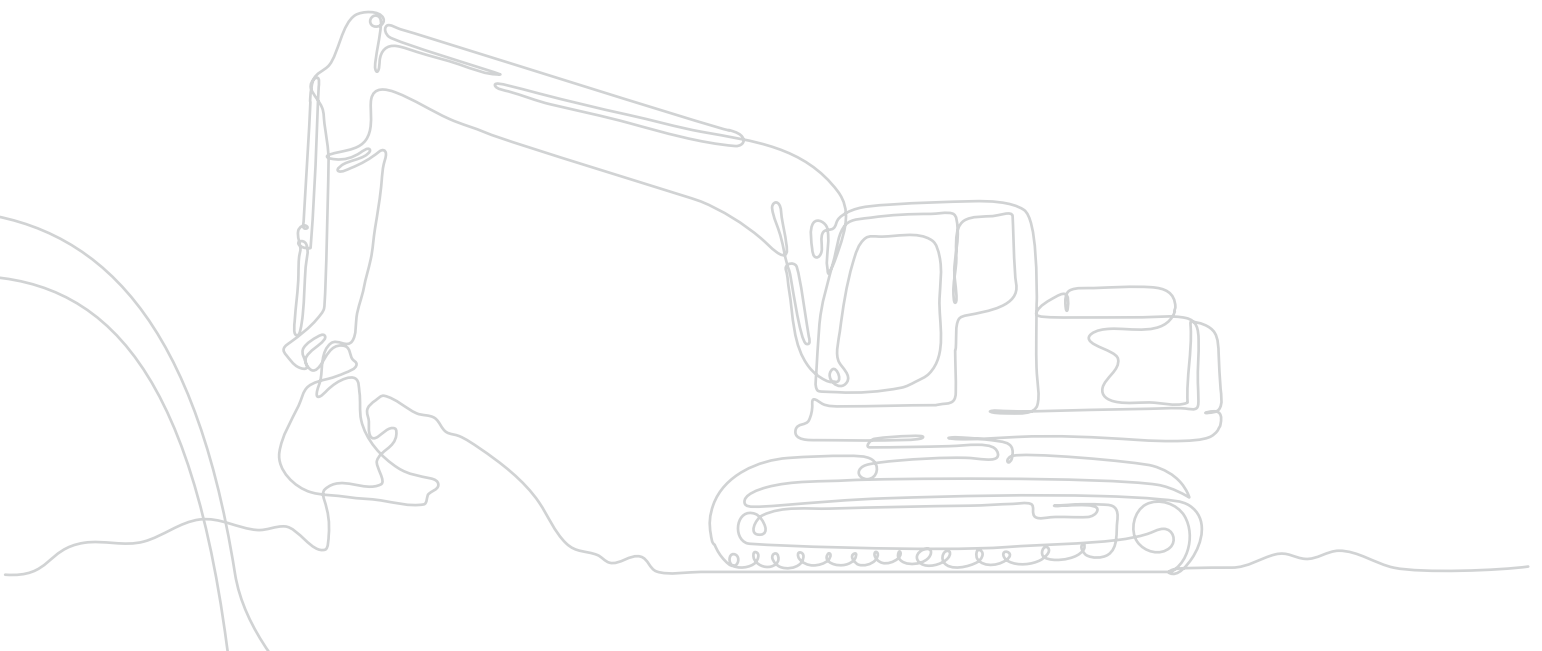
Economic growth success can be realized through actions directed to both domestic and offshore investments based on target sectors and markets. Improving regulatory approval processes and practices is also necessary to ensure timely handling of investment inquiries. Real-time market intelligence and engagement with businesses and industry partners are crucial for success.

Increasing municipal capacity and investing in resources for a formalized BR&E approach can help in understanding the local business community's needs, challenges and opportunities. Leveraging Markham's position as part of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), ensuring the availability of investment-ready land, and offering office-commercial incentive programs are all vital for securing investment in technology, hardware manufacturing, finance, creative industries and science sectors.

Concerted efforts that establish the MiX as Canada's premier destination for hardware manufacturing will further Markham's pursuit of the semiconductor, automotive technology and broader hardware manufacturing sectors. Public-private partnerships can also be

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<sup>1</sup> These areas are further detailed in Current Context: Building from Existing Capacity.



enhanced to promote local supply chain growth and resiliency. Building new relationships with European and East Asian companies, while reinforcing relationships and developing new ones with companies from the United States, will be important for Markham's role in the global microelectronics and hardware ecosystem.

Collaborating with local and regional bodies such as post-secondary institutions, business incubators and accelerators, investment and venture capital firms, and industry associations and networks is crucial for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. These partnerships also facilitate innovation and scale-up opportunities, encourage research, and provide access to technology-enhanced learning environments for residents and businesses. Collaborative partnerships will also ensure a dynamic talent pool with the necessary skills for the current and future labour market.

Creating a thriving arts, culture and creative ecosystem in Markham will require resourcing existing arts and culture assets, while investing in infrastructural and entrepreneurial capacity for creative industries. Markham's diversity enriches its arts and culture sector, with the Varley Art Gallery, Markham Museum and Flato Markham Theatre serving as the epicenters of arts and culture activity. The city also has many independent artists, arts organizations, creative industries and cultural organizations that contribute to an active and engaged arts sector. Initiatives targeting these various dimensions are necessary to effectively support the sector, from internal service delivery, to promotion, capacity building, facilitating connections and audience development.

Community economic development significantly influences Markham's economic success by directly supporting Markham's communities with solutions to local economic, social and environmental issues. Interventions aimed at increasing existing small business revenue, developing entrepreneurial capacity and improving quality of place will form the basis of a holistic and integrated approach.

## **The 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy**

The 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy was developed through background research and data analysis and a comprehensive consultation and engagement process.

Over the course of strategy development, 24 types of engagements<sup>2</sup> were conducted, involving more than 1,100 participants, including municipal leadership and staff, Markham residents, the business community with representation from target economic sectors, post-secondary partners, and organizations representing arts and culture, festivals, and events facilities.

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<sup>2</sup> Including surveys, workshops, focus groups, in-community pop-ups, and one-on-one interviews. The process is detailed in the Appendices: Strategy Background and Market Analysis.

Figure 1: Summary of input opportunities



The 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy harnesses the city's strong sense of community and quality of life built on a foundation of arts, culture and economic opportunity. Building on this success, the overarching purpose is to ensure Markham continues to be a vibrant community where creativity, collaboration and innovation provide opportunities for residents and businesses to realize their potential.

Several macroeconomic and social trends frame the 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy. As guiding principles, they provide direction, shape decision-making, and enable strategic framework development to achieve the desired outcomes. Building on the project's overarching purpose and the macro trends affecting Markham, five strategic goals frame the 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy. The strategy framework is illustrated in Figure 2.

The strategic goals of this strategy begin with, and are grounded in, Markham's economic development and culture service delivery areas. These include FDI, BR&E, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, arts and culture, talent and workforce, and community economic development. These core areas lay the groundwork for economic development and cultural efforts.

The strategic goals are highly interrelated and serve collectively to position Markham as a hub of export-oriented businesses and to foster innovation and commercialization to enable a critical concentration of businesses in Markham's target sectors. These include semiconductor, hardware, automotive technologies, creative industries and higher-order business services. The strategic goals integrate economic advancement with the preservation and enhancement of Markham's cultural vibrancy, leveraging synergies to enable a more resilient, vibrant, sustainable and prosperous community.

The strategic goals help guide major economic development and culture decisions and initiatives in Markham. Each goal is supported by a series of relevant objectives and tangible actions that demonstrate what could be achieved through a commitment to collaborate more effectively. The goals incorporate the thoughts and ideas reflected through stakeholder consultation, data analysis, and research findings. Markham is envisioned as a community that is a cultural destination that supports arts and culture programming, which contribute to its quality of life and sense of place. Strategic investments will enable a prosperous future for all Markham residents and drive sustainable growth.

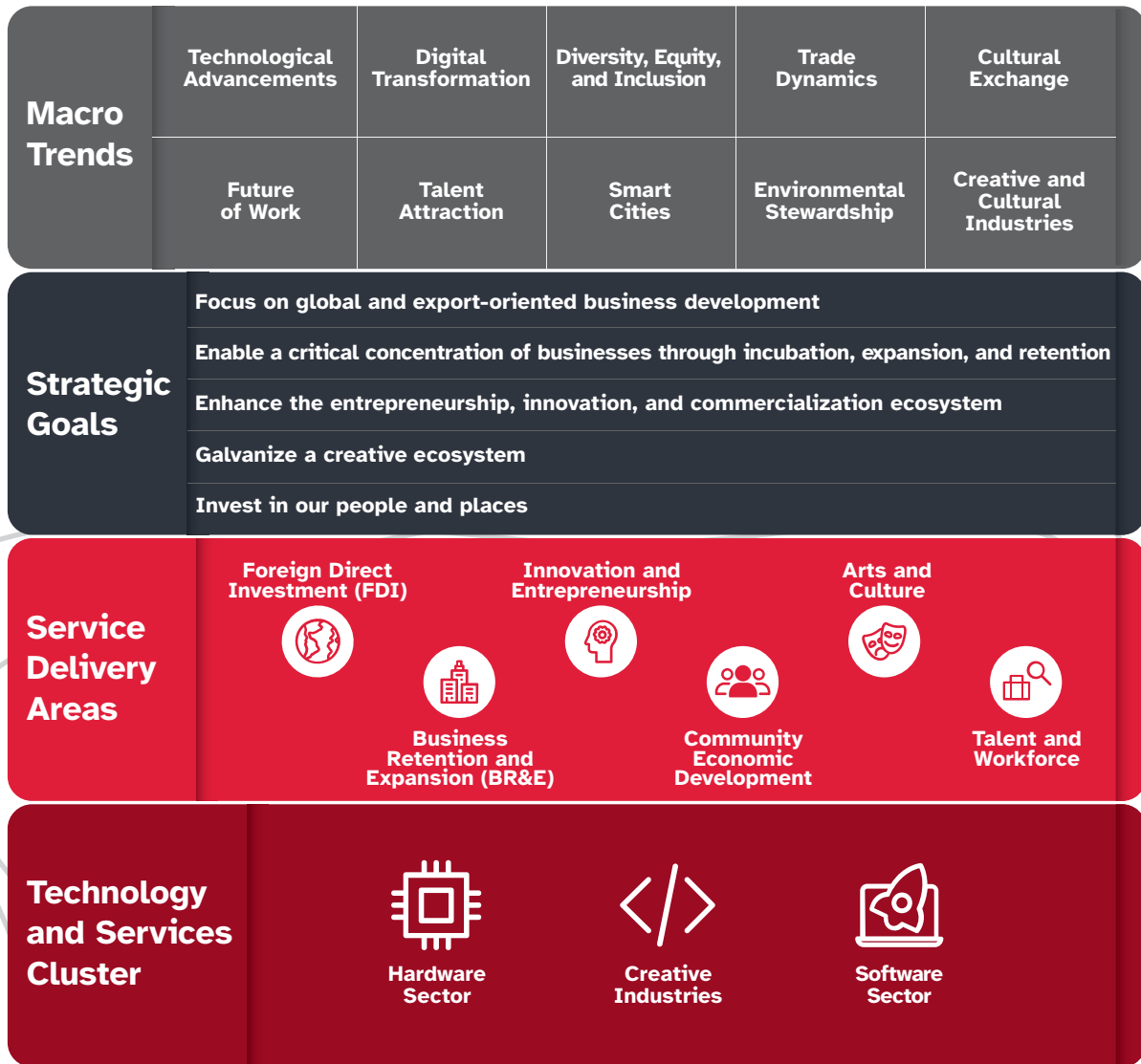
Partnership and collaboration are key to this collective approach. Markham will work with its partners and investors, including businesses, artists, creators, non-profits, post-secondary institutions, governments, foundations, and community members to secure investment, build programming and enable growth. The strategy emphasizes the importance of being action-oriented and is guided by strategic goals, objectives and actions that can be identified and evaluated over time.

Achieving these goals will require additional investments in staff resources, capacity, and infrastructure, and funding for community partnerships and programming, as well as additional technology tools. These investments are required to promote Markham's economic opportunities and support the growth of the City's arts and culture community.



Figure 2

# The 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy





Aerial view of downtown Markham



# From Global to Local: Impacts of Macro Trends

As Markham positions itself for continued growth, innovation, and resiliency, it is important to examine the impacts of economic, geopolitical, social and cultural macro trends. Large-scale changes such as technological advancements, globalization, workforce evolution, sustainable urbanism, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion play an essential role in shaping Markham's economic landscape, quality of life and social dynamics.

Several social, cultural, geopolitical and economic macro trends frame the context of the 2023 to 2027 Economic Development and Culture Strategy, guiding decision-making and strategic planning. By aligning the strategy with these trends, Markham can ensure an outcome-based approach and strategic actions that can adapt as new trends emerge. The success of the 2023 to 2027 Economic Development and Culture Strategy is predicated on the ability of Markham, its partners and stakeholders to harness the benefits and mitigate the challenges posed by these trends.

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are fundamental and overarching values influencing business practices, innovation, global competitiveness, market expansion, talent attraction and retention, creativity and culture, and social stability. Markham is one of the most diverse cities in Canada, with 82% of total population identifying as visible minority<sup>3</sup>. The city's arts and culture sectors are inclusive of both traditional and community artists, as can be seen in the character of its communities, parks, and neighbourhoods.

Markham recognizes DEI as essential to economic growth, and values the celebration and recognition of diverse backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. DEI principles frame this strategy in many ways, including

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population. Compared to Ontario and Canadian average at 34% and 27%, respectively.

supporting local artists and community-led festivals and events, facilitating cultural exchange, encouraging accessibility and openness of programming, and expanding arts and culture initiatives to reflect the diversity of the community. The strategy leverages Markham's *Diversity Action Plan and Eliminating Anti-Black Racism Plan* while harnessing partnerships with community associations to highlight community diversity.

## Technological advancements and digital transformation

The current era is marked by rapid and disruptive technological advancements, bringing about the fourth industrial revolution (also known as Industry 4.0), and fundamentally changing the way businesses operate and individuals interact.

The semiconductor industry is at the forefront of this global transformation, pioneering the advancements that power the digital age. With increasing demand from sub-sectors like automotive and artificial intelligence, the industry is projected to grow to US\$1 trillion in revenue by 2030<sup>4</sup>. Canada and Ontario's semiconductor industry is thriving, with more than 200 companies employing more than 30,000 people and generating more than \$6 billion in annual revenue due to the country's access to international markets, availability of critical minerals, highly skilled workforce, comprehensive manufacturing ecosystem, and research and development activity, among other factors<sup>5</sup>.

However, as investments like the \$150 million investment from IBM and the federal government in semiconductor testing and packaging in Bromont, Quebec highlight, the reshoring and reshaping of supply chains taking place due to geopolitical considerations and industry policy like the United States' CHIPS Act, show there is an opportunity for further growth in the sector for Markham and Canada. As home to Canada's largest semiconductor cluster, Markham has a solid foundation for developing this sector, supported by industry leaders like AMD and Qualcomm, as well as by ventureLAB's Hardware Catalyst Initiative and Canada's Semiconductor Council.

Ontario's economy is benefitting from a slew of new investments in electric vehicles (EV)<sup>6</sup>, including the more than \$20 billion in investment for a Volkswagen battery gigafactory in St. Thomas<sup>7</sup>, a \$2.8 billion investment for Stellantis assembly plants in Windsor and Brampton<sup>8</sup>, and a \$100 million investment in Brantford, Ontario by Mitsui High-tec (Canada), Inc., to manufacture motor core components for electric vehicles<sup>9</sup>. The EV battery supply chain presents numerous opportunities for Markham, with more than 440 businesses in the automotive sector and support organizations that include the GM Technical Centre Markham, Qualcomm's semiconductor technologies and Veoneer Canada.

To maintain competitiveness in these sectors, Markham must plan for ongoing trends, such the changing nature of investments in technologies, increasing supply network visibility, and the need to foster greater workforce agility as the nature of manufacturing continuously evolves.

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4 Deloitte 2023 Semiconductor Industry Outlook.

5 Ontario Centres of Excellence

6 ibid

7 [Prime Minister of Canada](#). April 2023. Volkswagen's new electric vehicle battery plant will create thousands of new jobs.

8 ibid

9 [Invest Ontario](#). June 2023. Invest Ontario grant of \$3.1 million furthers Ontario's leadership in electric vehicle manufacturing

Cities are emerging as hubs for start-up and scale-up innovation in sectors ranging from fintech to medtech, enabled by a thriving network of incubators, accelerators and venture capital firms. Corporations are increasingly allocating funding to venture capital units as part of their strategic investment and innovation efforts, recognizing the benefits of engaging with start-ups and innovative technologies.

With its strong foundation of incubators and accelerators, including Canada's only hardware-focused incubator, ventureLAB, York University's YSpace and Seneca Polytechnic's HELIX, Markham has a strong support network for entrepreneurs and technology start-ups, while also benefiting from its proximity to Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area's network of incubators and accelerators.

Companies like Blumind, a deep-tech silicon startup, find that access to the equipment in ventureLAB's \$9 million-dollar prototyping and testing lab has been instrumental to their growth, enabling them to advance their solutions rapidly, in a sector that normally incurs lengthy entry and scale times.

## Trade dynamics and cultural exchange

Globalization has made nations and cities more interdependent in an increasingly interconnected world. New trade dynamics have emerged, characterized by cross-border supply chains, free trade agreements and FDI. These economic shifts have been paralleled by a vibrant global cultural exchange whereby cities across the world are sharing and growing diverse cultures.

The modern era has witnessed an accelerated flow of goods, services and capital across borders. In 2021, Canadian exports of goods and services expanded by 18.3% to reach a





record high of \$766 billion<sup>10</sup>. Through Canada's 15 Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), trade barriers have been progressively lowered, resulting in a surge in international trade over the past decade.

Canada has been developing lasting economic relationships in the Asia-Pacific region. Despite ongoing challenges, China remains Canada's second-largest trading partner and Japan is the nation's fourth-largest trading partner, as well as the largest source of FDI from Asia<sup>11</sup>. Over recent years, Ontario remains the top Canadian province for FDI. In 2021, the province ranked third in North America by capital investment and fourth for foreign direct investment in North America by project numbers, higher than New York, California or Ohio<sup>12</sup>.

Globalization and immigration have led to cultural knowledge exchange in our cities and communities. As people move across borders in search of opportunities, they carry with them the rich tapestry of their native cultures. Newcomer society often introduces food, music, art, festivals and practices, which become part of the local fabric over time. Cultural exchange and dispersion help to foster a sense of cultural diversity and global unity. The arts, culture and creative industries can facilitate and enhance such cultural exchange and cross-cultural learning.

The arts offer a path toward fostering community development and social cohesion, while building diversity, equity and inclusion in a city. As global movements champion these values, cities worldwide are realizing the economic and cultural advantages of fostering diverse, equitable and inclusive societies.

With its multicultural population and dynamic economy, Markham is primed to capture the opportunities presented by globalization. Markham is long recognized as the most culturally diverse city in Canada, with more than 50% of residents identifying their cultural origin in Asian countries<sup>13</sup>. This multicultural diversity has transformed the city, now home to a variety of global cuisine, art and festivals. While the influx has added to the cultural richness of Markham, there are concerns about the homogenization of cultures, where traditions and practices blend. As Markham continues to grow its technology sub-sectors and attract a diverse pool of talent from around the world, further enriching its cultural advantages, engagement with ethnic associations and promotion of intercultural dialogue will be the key toward building a global city.

<sup>10</sup> [Government of Canada](#). State of Trade 2022: The Benefits of Free Trade Agreements.

<sup>11</sup> [Government of Canada](#). Canada and the Asia-Pacific

<sup>12</sup> [Invest Ontario](#). January 2023. Ontario, Canada ranks top 5 for FDI into North America.

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

## Creative and cultural industries

Globally, there is a growing trend toward the emergence of creative cultural industries as the next large contributor to economic growth and wealth in a community. Countries are earning revenue through international trade in creative goods and services, with creative goods exports amounting to US\$524 million, and creative services exports reaching a staggering US\$1.1 trillion<sup>14</sup>.

As a subset of the broader knowledge-based economy, the creative and cultural industries sector included a range of economic activities that are based on the creation, production, and distribution of cultural goods and services. The sector includes the screen and digital industries (e.g., film and television, media, video games), design industries (e.g., graphics, fashion, interior, architecture), heritage-focused industries (e.g., museums, galleries), arts-based industries (e.g., visual arts, performing arts) and music industries (e.g., sound production).

Digital media is a significant contributor to the sector, evident through a combination of communications, broadcasting, computer information systems, and digital interactive media consolidation and industry convergence. Interactive digital media (IDM) is one of the five key technologies driving innovation in Canada<sup>15</sup>, with global leading companies in creative technologies such as augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR), video game production, visual effects (VFX), and animation. Moreover, as per the *Measuring Success* report<sup>16</sup>, Ontario's IDM companies are expected to see substantial growth over the coming years due to the advancements in businesses in this space. In 2017, the provincial sector generated \$1.66 billion with an implied profit margin of 31%.

The rise of the creative cultural industries is not just an economic success story, it is also a conduit for global cultural transformation. The sector plays an essential role in promoting social and cultural diversity, while reflecting the unique perspectives and experiences of diverse communities and cultures. As content and ideas flow, there is a vibrant exchange of values, stories and aesthetics. This fosters greater cultural understanding by challenging stereotypes and breaking down long-standing barriers. Through films, music, literature and other mediums, diverse voices find a platform to be heard.

The sector relies heavily on the skills and talents of creative professionals, such as writers, artists, designers, musicians and actors. However, the precarious nature of creative jobs—including self-employment, contractual forms of work, multiple job holdings, and non-institutional support—brings forth its own challenges related to sector growth and sustainability. The sector relies heavily on intellectual property, such as patents, trademarks, and copyrights. However, protecting these assets can be difficult, especially in the digital age where content can be easily copied and distributed.

14 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. 2022. Creative Economy Outlook 2022.

15 Ivus, M; Kotak, A. (August 2021). Onwards and Upwards - Digital Talent Outlook 2025. Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC). Ottawa, Canada.

16 Nordicity. May 2019. Measuring Success: The Impact of the Interactive Digital Media Sector in Ontario – 2nd edition.

The creative industries are a central element of the Markham's services cluster. The city is home to more than 3,900 creative businesses<sup>17</sup>, accounting for 7% of all businesses. The numerous cultural assets across the city, from events and festivals to independent artists, theatres, galleries, and museums, and the three municipally operated cultural facilities, offer opportunities to expand sustainable impact investment in the arts and culture sectors while continuing to position the creative and cultural industries sector as a key economic driver.

Growing the sector in Markham requires a focus on nurturing and building creative capacity and capability through support programs and initiatives. This could include working with innovation and small business partners and providing specialized entrepreneurship support and business skill development. The creative workforce and entrepreneurs require programming and support related to sales and audience development, business-to-business networking and business matching, and business skills.

## Future of work and talent attraction

The future of work is rapidly changing due to technology, globalization, demographics and changing personal expectations, particularly amongst the millennial labour force<sup>18</sup>. The global shift to a knowledge-based economy creates an evolving workplace and flexible workforce augmented by software, robotics and artificial intelligence<sup>19</sup>. Most technologies are expected to have a net positive impact on jobs over the next five years, with the biggest drivers of job growth being big data analytics, climate change technologies, and encryption and cybersecurity. At the same time, these technologies all have the power to cause significant labour market disruption and job displacement for traditional lower-skilled workers in these sectors<sup>20</sup>.

These trends are creating divergent outcomes for global labour markets in 2023<sup>21</sup>. While technology-based and high-skilled workers fare well, workers with only basic education and the underrepresented labour force (e.g., Indigenous and First Nations People, visible minorities, women, people with disabilities) face lower employment levels. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis, an aging domestic population, barriers to employment, and reliance on immigration for close to 100% of net labour force growth further add to current and future labour shortages<sup>22</sup>. The structural factors that have an impact on the Canadian labour market make it critical to equip young talent with a broad suite of technical and soft skills to succeed in the knowledge economy<sup>23</sup>.

The shift toward a boundaryless workplace has gained unprecedented momentum, allowing employees to operate remotely, reducing commute times and offering a better work-life balance. This has also decoupled employment from geographic constraints, allowing companies to tap into a national or global talent pool.

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17 Defined based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and include accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services, architectural, engineering and related services, advertising, public relations, and related services, specialized design services, motion picture and video industries and other professional, scientific and technical services

18 Deloitte. July 2016. The Future of the Workforce: Critical drivers and challenges.

19 Deloitte. January 2017. Future of work: The augmented workforce.

20 ibid

21 World Economic Forum. May 2023. Future of Jobs Report 2023.

22 Deloitte. September 2022. Understanding Canada's Labour Shortage.

23 Brookfield Institute. March 2017. Future-proof: Preparing young Canadians for the future of work.

As the importance of living close to the workplace diminishes, there is an opportunity to rethink placemaking and workforce development. This includes cities prioritizing residential comfort and transit systems, and shifting focus from traditional rush-hour patterns to more flexible timings and routes. Office spaces are being designed with open layouts and collaborative spaces, placing greater emphasis on biophilic design, wellness features, eco-friendly materials, access to public transit, shared parking and other on-site amenities. Moreover, cities are establishing collaborations with educational institutions, online learning platforms and digital hubs to cater to the demands of remote professions and industries.

Markham has a strong talent base and is a draw for skilled workers. The city has a large share of people with university degrees above the bachelor's level at 39%. In contrast, the York Region share stands at 33%. When considering the talent index, Markham ranks second behind the City of Ottawa and ahead of most communities in the GTHA, including Toronto, Vaughan, Brampton and Hamilton<sup>24</sup>.

Markham's advantages make it an ideal location for the future of work. Its technology ecosystem offers networking, collaboration and growth opportunities, while its cultural diversity and mix of urban amenities and green spaces provide a balanced lifestyle that attracts talent. Additionally, the future York University Markham Campus will offer access to upskilling and professional development opportunities. The continued support and growth of a vibrant arts and culture offering contributes to the balanced lifestyle that attracts talent.

To achieve inclusive economic growth, Markham needs to understand the impact of technology and globalization on education, skills and career development. Collaboration with business, education and training institutions, and workforce intermediaries is necessary to support a dynamic workforce that can continually upskill and reskill. This requires rethinking education, career models, and lifelong learning approaches, while fostering public-private partnerships.

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<sup>24</sup> The talent index is an overall ranking of the selected comparable communities and peer regions based on how well they score on each indicator. For the talent index, four indicator scores are calculated: the share of knowledge workers, the share of high-tech occupations, the share of the population with a post-secondary degree and the share of the population with a post-secondary degree in science, arts, or business.





## Smart cities and environmental stewardship

Technology, urban planning and environmental consciousness are reshaping urban spaces. At the forefront of this transformation is the Smart Cities movement, which leverages technology to improve efficiency, sustainability and livability, along with a global emphasis on environmental stewardship that prioritizes sustainable and eco-friendly practices.

Modern cities are integrating digital technology into their infrastructure to improve quality of life for their residents. This trend includes everything from internet of things (IoT)-enabled public transport systems and energy efficient buildings, to AI-driven public safety initiatives and streamlined municipal service delivery through digital platforms.

From live streaming council meetings to providing online permit application portals, Canadian municipalities are becoming more transparent and accessible in governance and service delivery. Larger municipalities like Markham have created open data programs and policies to enhance government accessibility and transparency.

Cities around the world are prioritizing environmental stewardship by investing in green infrastructure, sustainable transportation, energy efficiency and water conservation. These initiatives help cities conserve resources, reduce their carbon footprint and protect natural ecosystems while fostering economic growth. Energy efficiency, water conservation, and providing incentives for residential solar and wind projects are also common municipal initiatives. There is also increasing recognition that urban cities can integrate sustainability and culture to improve quality of life and sense of belonging.

As a technology hub in the GTHA, Markham is uniquely positioned for smart city development. The recently announced automotive and mobility demonstration zone announced for Markham Centre is an example of the City's leadership in encouraging the testing of new technologies and their implementation in city building. Likewise, the City's adoption of AI in its infrastructure maintenance and customer service departments showcases the City's leadership when it comes to adopting new technologies. The presence of technology firms and talent that embrace innovation provides a foundation for Markham to continue digitizing services and supporting community building through technology.

Markham has been a leader in embracing sustainability initiatives. From constructing the foundation of its new urban downtown, Markham Centre, on a district energy system and setting the stage for the largest concentration of LEED residential buildings, to deployment of renewable energy solutions and implementation of a comprehensive energy efficiency retrofit program, Markham's *Greenprint Sustainability Plan* continues to drive innovation and community climate resilience.







Rendering of Downtown Markham Master Plan



INTEGRITY  
HARD  
WORK  
*values*  
DEDICATION



Erich Ko, CEO and Co-Founder and Boyd Reid, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer of Hop in Technologies



# Current Context: Building from Existing Capacity

Understanding Markham's current service delivery areas and target sectors is crucial as they form the foundation for the strategy. Services provided by the City should focus on priority and growth sectors, which are the most likely to provide lasting economic benefits and growth.

## Markham's service delivery areas

Markham's Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship team focuses on several core areas of economic development including FDI, BR&E, the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, talent and workforce, community economic development, as well as arts and culture, which includes overseeing several cultural facilities, supporting community arts organizations, and enabling corporate and community events. These core areas lay the groundwork for economic development efforts and can be continually built upon to improve service for clients and to create a larger positive economic impact for communities. The service delivery areas are described as follows:

### Foreign direct investment

There is significant global competition for FDI. To capture new investment, municipalities must be able to differentiate themselves from others through their unique competitive advantages. FDI can be captured through existing foreign businesses expansion efforts, or through greenfield or brownfield expansion of new companies.



Over the past three decades, Markham's economic landscape has been positively influenced by FDI activities that are owed to the City's prioritized effort to implement an active international investment and attraction program. Today, Markham's reputation as a desirable global location and a gateway to the North American market is backed by the city's established base of 240 foreign businesses (supporting 32,000 jobs).

### **Business retention and expansion**

The intended outcomes of a successful BR&E program are to understand the needs of local businesses, to increase the ease of working with the municipality by understanding the processes which inhibit investment, and to help businesses navigate local resources to meet their needs.

Markham's economic development staff have historically performed informal BR&E activities and have routinely supported connections between local businesses and civic leaders. The City can benefit from implementing a formal BR&E program to act as a channel to connect, build and strengthen its relationships with local industry employers to develop stronger insights into these companies' operational and business needs. These insights can then be utilized to improve City processes, make relevant connections to partners, and improve marketing efforts for investment attraction.

### **Innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem**

The innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem involves partners from industry, academia, community and governments focused on assisting new entrepreneurs to strategically build their businesses faster and more effectively. Startup businesses, particularly in high growth sectors, such as technology, play a key role in economic development and diversification.

Markham has an established and well-supported innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem with various partners such as ventureLAB, YSpace and HELIX. Markham's ecosystem encourages the collaboration of local and regional bodies such as post-secondary institutions, business incubators and accelerators, investment and venture capital firms, and industry associations and networks. These partnerships not only facilitate innovation, scale-up and research but also provide access to technology-enhanced learning environments for residents and businesses.

### **Community economic development**

Community economic development (CED) initiatives help existing businesses grow while cultivating an entrepreneurship ecosystem. CED is a holistic, integrated approach that focuses on capacity building and asset development. Strategies are often implemented through many small interventions aimed at increasing existing small business revenue, developing entrepreneurial capacity and improving quality of place.

Community economic development plays a significant role in Markham's economic success and directly supports Markham's communities with solutions to economic, social and environmental issues. The City has developed several program interventions aimed at increasing existing small business revenue and developing entrepreneurial capacity that directly contribute to the quality of life and placemaking efforts that sustain and enhance a vibrant working environment.

### Talent and workforce

Talent and workforce development is a growing challenge across Canada and is increasingly becoming the top priority when businesses are making investment decisions. Attracting and developing a skilled workforce is crucial for Markham to ensure continued economic completeness and business sustainability.

The City of Markham is strongly positioned to attract its desired workforce given its geographic positioning within the GTHA and its existing high-tech ecosystem that is a significant draw for workers in the knowledge economy. Ensuring that talent and workforce development is connected to economic development efforts has become a priority for municipalities as lines between the historically separate fields have blurred due to the growing labour shortage.

### Arts and culture

Markham's arts and culture sector includes many dimensions: City-run institutions, independent artists, arts workers and organizations, community groups, festivals and events, and creative businesses. The city's diversity enriches the arts and culture sector, with the Varley Art Gallery, Markham Museum and Flato Theatre serving as the epicenters of this activity.

Markham also has many independent artists, arts organizations, creative businesses, and cultural organizations that contribute to an active and engaged arts sector. Necessary supporting initiatives range from internal service delivery to promotion, capacity building, facilitating connections and audience development.



Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)



Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)



Innovation and Entrepreneurship



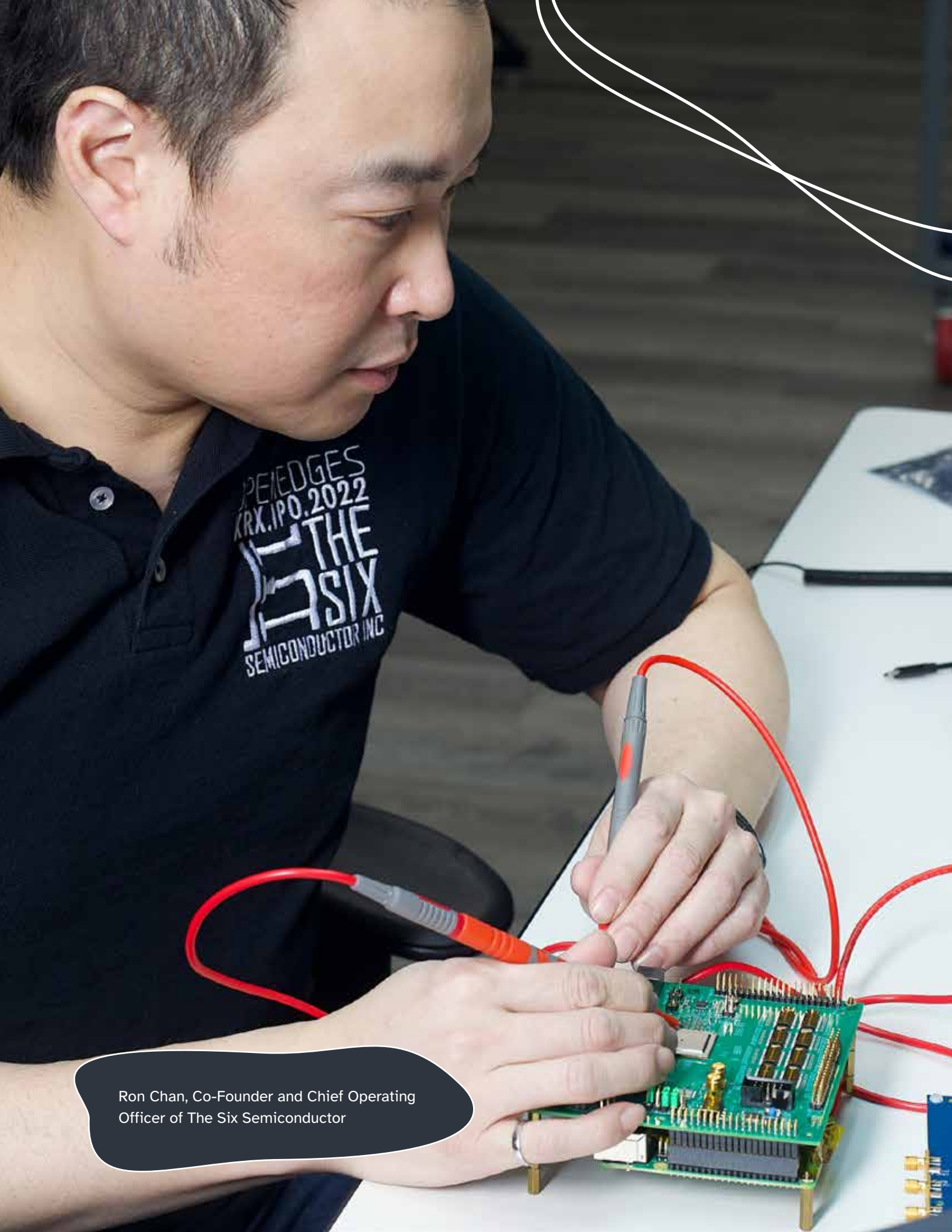
Community Economic Development



Arts and Culture



Talent and Workforce



Ron Chan, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer of The Six Semiconductor

# Markham's Innovation Ecosystem: A Foundation of Creativity

Markham has a diverse innovation economy, driven by target clusters, sectors and verticals of focus with a strong foundation and the potential for future growth. The 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy positions creativity as the foundation for Markham's target sectors. Grounding the strategy in creativity fosters a culture of innovation, technology and entrepreneurship, while supporting continued economic growth and job creation.

Recognizing creativity as a critical component of a city's innovation economy enables Markham to prioritize the creative industries and the arts and cultural sector as economic drivers, while also contributing to the overall quality of life and cultural vibrancy of the community. It also acknowledges that Markham's economic strengths are drawn from a talent pool that embraces creativity and innovation to drive solutions that address market gaps and societal challenges.

To continue to grow Markham's economy on a foundation of creativity, the City must leverage its economic strengths and continue to build its reputation as an innovative community.

## Markham's innovation ecosystem

Markham's innovation ecosystem is driven by the technology and services clusters, a concentration of interconnected companies, suppliers, and related institutions in the creative industries and the hardware and software sectors. These sectors are supported by organizations and infrastructure such as post-secondary institutions, research and development activities, local governments funding sources, and networking opportunities.

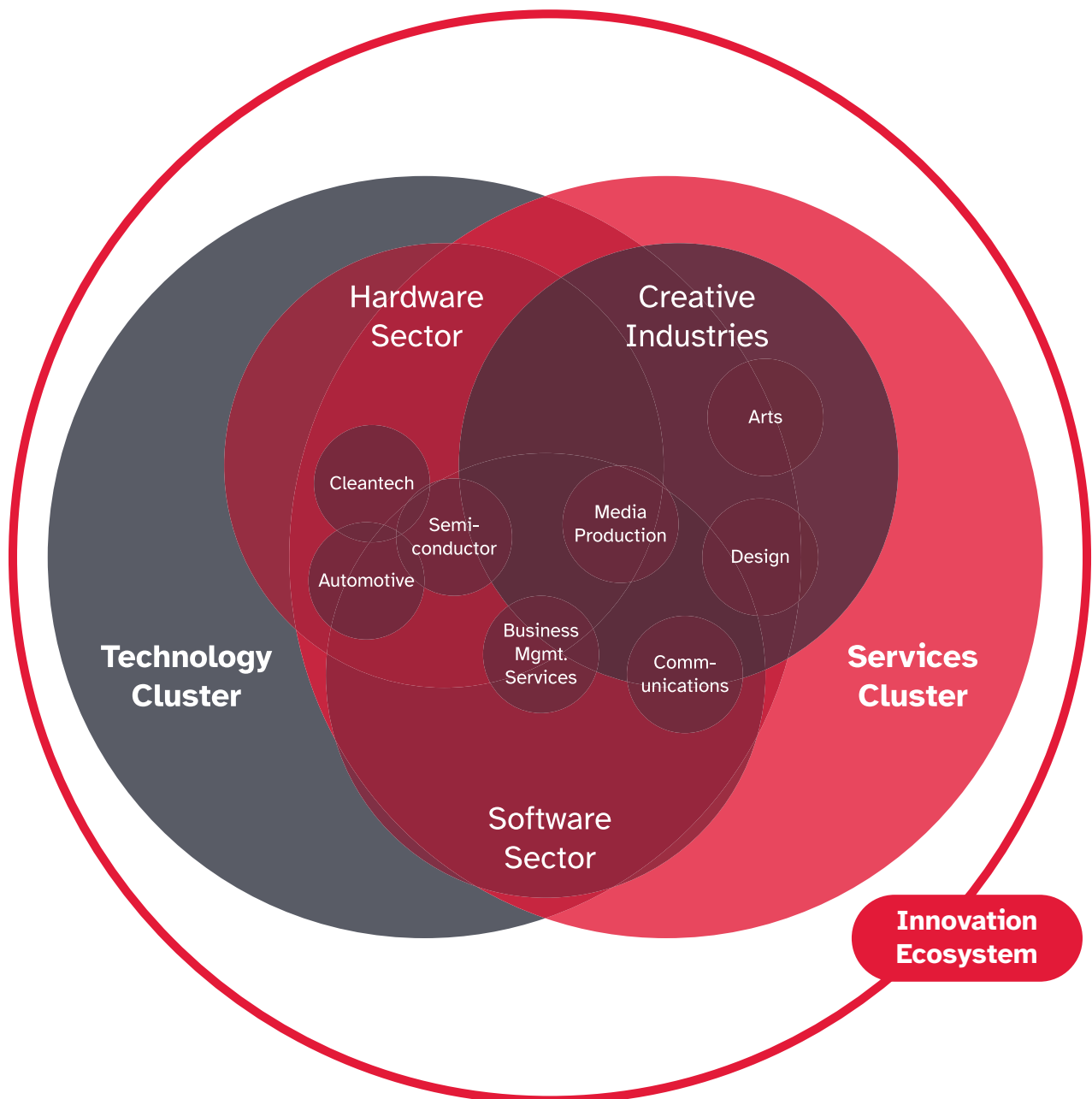
The ecosystem serves as a catalyst for innovation by providing a supportive environment and resources that enable collaboration and knowledge sharing among companies and organizations. This collaboration can lead to the development of new products, services



and technologies that drive innovation within the ecosystem. At the intersection of Markham's technology and services clusters are the key sectors that drive growth, namely, the creative industries, the hardware sector, and the software sector.

These sectors, sub-sectors and verticals represent industries where Markham can continue to build its reputation as an innovative community, while enabling a critical economic base.

Figure 3: Markham's Innovation Ecosystem: A Foundation of Creativity



## Technology Cluster

Markham is a key contributor to Canada's gross domestic product (GDP), generating an impressive \$20.7 billion in 2022. The city's economy is a major supporter of more than 30% of York Region's total GDP, with projected contributions of \$63.4 billion over the next three years. The city's employment base is also noteworthy, accounting for 29% of York Region's workforce and driven by professional services, finance, manufacturing and technology firms.

Part of the GTHA technology cluster, Markham boasts the highest concentration of technology workers in the country. With more than 1,500 tech companies employing more than 35,400 knowledge sector workers, this cluster has established Markham as an innovation powerhouse in the Canadian economy.

Within the technology cluster, Markham's strengths include both the hardware and software sectors. Manufacturing is a priority sector in Markham's economy. It accounts for more than \$11.5 billion in exports, representing 42% of total exports and 8% of the total employment base. Markham companies manufacture hardware spanning across automotive, robotics, medical devices, life sciences, telecommunications and clean technologies and generating more than 14,000 jobs in 700-plus local firms. Markham is home to Canada's largest concentration of semiconductor companies with a strong focus on research and development, which provides the foundational brainpower for modern hardware.

The intersection of Highways 7 and 404 and Markham Centre is identified as an Urban Growth Centre in *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. The area contains important economic assets, including Canadian corporate head offices such as Allstate Insurance and Hyundai Canada, and major anchor firms such as IBM and Motorola. The regionally significant ICT industry cluster found here includes anchor firms such as, OnX, AMD and Qualcomm, as well as laboratory facilities and many smaller firms.

Markham is also home to a Seneca Polytechnic campus and a York University satellite campus at Markham Centre. With its strategic location and focus on tech, finance, pharmaceutical production and science-based industries, the city is well-positioned to leverage these assets through actively supporting and promoting agglomeration economies. This enables businesses and organizations to cluster together, share knowledge, match complementary skills and resources, and focus economic growth and competitiveness.

Markham's sub-sectors of focus within the hardware and software clusters include:

- Semiconductor – focus on continued research and development growth, as well as exploring packaging, testing and niche manufacturing opportunities
- Automotive – focus on software and hardware elements for electric and autonomous vehicles, as well as design and engineering
- Medical – focus on pharmaceutical production, research and development for medical devices and instruments, as well as their manufacture

- Clean – focus on clean technology software and hardware manufacturing
- Communications – focus on communication technology software and hardware manufacturing
- Business Management – focus on software solutions that provide business management support and delivery

Markham's focus on the semiconductor sector includes continued research and development growth, as well as exploring packaging, testing and niche manufacturing opportunities. Hardware components manufacturing, such as sensors, microcontrollers and memory chips to power advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) and other safety features offer opportunities for economic diversification and growth. On the innovation front, major auto manufacturers are taking advantage of Markham's technology infrastructure and ecosystem to achieve advances in electric vehicles, self-driving vehicles, sustainable batteries, green energy and advanced manufacturing. Markham can continue to leverage and nurture its existing ecosystem to increase its competitiveness in this sector, especially in a new generation of advanced EVs<sup>25</sup>.

Industry supports such as the Canada's Semiconductor Council and ventureLAB's Hardware Catalyst Initiative position Markham for continued success. ventureLAB is Canada's only semiconductor and hardware-focused incubator, focusing on medtech, cleantech, autotech and advanced manufacturing sectors. The MiX will catalyze the City's efforts, connecting knowledge to production and attracting high-tech collaborators and manufacturers.

Markham's opportunity in the medical sector includes pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing, medical equipment and supplies manufacturing, and scientific research and development services. These areas have substantial private investment potential and significant opportunities to access provincial and federal support. The semiconductor sector forms a major supply chain for the medical sector as it relies on semiconductor hardware components such as medical devices and imaging equipment to diagnose and treat patients.

The clean technology sector is of particular interest for Markham, given Ontario's access to critical minerals and international markets, a comprehensive manufacturing ecosystem, and research, development and innovation supports. Further, environmental policies enacted to mitigate greenhouse emissions provide opportunities for continued focus and investment in clean technologies.

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<sup>25</sup> [Perspective.ca](https://perspective.ca) - Markham: Powering Next-Generation Auto Innovation.



## Services Cluster

Markham's location, reputation and quality of life have attracted a variety of leading industry employers in computer systems design, management, scientific and technical consulting services, architectural, engineering, and related services, as well as in scientific research and development services.

The services cluster, which is drawn from a creative, diverse and highly educated workforce, accounts for one-sixth of Markham's total employment. The largest employment sector within the services cluster is professional, scientific and technical services, which employs more than 30,000 people and generates more than \$2.3 billion in revenues. This is followed by the FIRE sector (finance and insurance, real estate) and the creative industries, each accounting for 10% of all jobs in the city.

Markham is a leader in FDI in York Region, having accounted for 15 projects, with software and IT services being the most prominent industries. As of 2019, Markham has received more than \$27.6 billion through foreign and external domestic sources, representing a notable 33% of all York Region's exports, which amount to \$83.2 billion<sup>26</sup>.

The strong economic performance of the professional and technical services sector enables opportunities in software and computer services. This sub-sector includes software publishers, computer systems design, and data processing, and is an integral part of the Canadian ICT sector, providing investment synergies for the city. While some elements of Markham's creative industries—such as its software sector—are strong, areas such as design, digital media, and film production are sub-sectors that Markham should focus on expanding. Markham has a unique opportunity to focus its efforts on niche sectors, including interactive digital media and health-based technologies.

Interactive digital media (IDM) refers to digital media products that require the active participation and input from users, which has an impact on how that content is experienced by the user<sup>27</sup>. This can include video games, virtual and augmented reality experiences, mobile apps, and other digital media products that are designed to engage users in an interactive way. In addition to being interactive, IDM often incorporates elements of multimedia, including the production and delivery of content such as motion pictures, videos, television programs, or commercials. Markham's opportunities in the technology-based medical cluster provide opportunities for the digitization of healthcare. Investment opportunities include telemedicine platforms, virtual care technologies, and existing care facilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a positive impact on this segment as demand for digital healthcare has increased.

Growing the creative economy in Markham requires a focus on nurturing and building creative capacity and capability through support programs and initiatives. Markham's creative economy includes a variety of cultural assets, including creative and cultural organizations, creative cultural enterprises, cultural sites and installations, education and training institutions, festivals and events, arts and cultural organizations (e.g., performing arts, visual arts, etc.), and cultural spaces.

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<sup>26</sup> Lightcast, 2022

<sup>27</sup> Ontario Creates, IDM Fund Concept Definition and Production Guidelines – Interactive Content (Non-Linear), 2022



Bus picking up a passenger at a Viva Rapid Transit stop in Markham



Support for the various aspects of the creative economy could include working with innovation and small business partners and providing specialized entrepreneurship support and business skill development. Creative industries entrepreneurs require programming and support on sales development, business-to-business networking, business matching, and addressing skill and business literacy needs. Valuable support for artists and arts organizations could include professional development, networking, and capacity building. Capital support for cultural spaces also supports the creative economy, as these provide necessary spaces for artists to create and showcase their work.

Markham's High Order Business Services (HOBS), which include corporate headquarters, accounting, law, business management, and scientific and technical consulting firms, play a key role as "enablers" of the services clusters. The HOBS are producers of knowledge and information, facilitators of information and knowledge exchange, and sources of specialized knowledge, all of which support innovation, exports and economic growth<sup>28</sup>. Nurturing and increasing the number of HOBS businesses is essential to attract and retain businesses in the focused sectors since they create a critical ecosystem for other businesses to operate.

Markham also needs to consider the impact of these trends on employment lands. As the demand shifts to knowledge-based or creative class economies, a parallel shift is evident in the character and built form of employment lands. Markham, located in Canada's largest technology corridor and office agglomeration in the GTHA, is at the forefront of this transformation. The city is currently developing Markham Centre, a long-term vision to create a vibrant, intensive, mixed-use downtown<sup>29</sup>. The 1,900-acre site of designated private and city-owned land in the MiX also positions Markham to become the largest innovation district in North America<sup>30</sup>.

Opportunities exist to position multi-purpose facilities, major office buildings, and flex office buildings within employment areas. Modern and flexible zoning can be implemented to create unique employment-focused districts and mixed-use precincts that support high-value industries and vibrant, complete communities. Markham Centre and the MiX represent significant potential for fostering economic development and cultural growth.

This necessitates prioritizing transit to existing employment concentrations and focusing on re-urbanization by leveraging the existing employment base and economic assets, particularly the existing services cluster. Directing new office uses to transit-accessible locations, integrating proactive planning and placemaking, and providing access by transit, walking and cycling are critical.

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<sup>28</sup> Neptis, High Order Businesses.

<sup>29</sup> City of Markham, *Markham Centre – Our Downtown Project*, 2022.

<sup>30</sup> [Markham is creating an innovation hub the size of roughly 600 soccer fields, its mayor says](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/markham-innovation) CBC News. [www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/markham-innovation](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/markham-innovation)

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Ann Chau, Director of The Singing School



# Strategic Direction: Showcasing Goals and Objectives

The 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy leverages the city's strong sense of community and the excellent quality of life that has been cultivated through arts, culture and economic opportunity. Building on this success, the overarching purpose is to ensure Markham continues to be a vibrant community where creativity, collaboration and innovation provide opportunities for residents and businesses to realize their potential.

The strategy identifies five strategic goals that help guide major economic development and culture-related decisions and initiatives in Markham. Each goal is supported by a series of relevant objectives and tangible actions that demonstrate what could be achieved if there is a commitment to collaborate more effectively, incorporating the thoughts and ideas reflected through stakeholder consultation, data analysis and research findings.

The strategy goals begin with and are grounded in Markham's Department of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship's service delivery areas. These include FDI, BR&E, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, arts and culture, talent and workforce, and community economic development. These core areas lay the groundwork for economic development and cultural efforts.

# Strategic Goals and Objectives

**1**

## **Focus on global and export-oriented business development**

- Foster foreign direct investment opportunities that support the growth of Markham's target sectors
- Support the development of infrastructure and incentives to encourage investment attraction
- Support business growth through the facilitation of export and trade opportunities

**2**

## **Enable a critical concentration of businesses through incubation, expansion and retention**

- Increase capacity and invest in resources for a more formalized BR&E approach
- Support business growth through enhanced approvals processes and infrastructure investment
- Support business networking and community building

**3**

## **Enhance the entrepreneurship, innovation and commercialization ecosystem**

- Work with local and regional bodies to enable innovation and entrepreneurship in Markham
- Realize Markham Centre's potential as a creative innovation district
- Establish the Markham Innovation Exchange (MiX) as Canada's premier destination for hardware

# 4

## **Galvanize a creative ecosystem**

- Increase visibility and density of arts and culture in Markham
- Develop supports and infrastructure to attract investments in film production
- Build a sense of community and joint mission in Markham's arts and culture sector
- Grow awareness of Markham's arts and culture through improved marketing and collaboration
- Renew and reinvigorate Markham Museum's role and reimagine it as a community and cultural destination
- Grow and expand live theatre opportunities in Markham
- Maximize the Varley Art Gallery's capacity as an arts hub

# 5

## **Invest in our people and places**

- Support community-based business formation and healthy commercial centres
- Support the retail health and destination draw of Main Street Unionville
- Support the retail health and destination draw of Main Street Markham
- Support the Yonge Street commercial corridor in Thornhill
- Promote and support entrepreneurs who are representative of Markham's diversity
- Collaborate on programming and delivery across City cultural facilities and City-led events with a focus on reflecting Markham's cultural diversity
- Support community arts and culture programming that contribute to Markham's quality of life and celebrate its diversity
- Support access to the required workforce by facilitating connections between academia and industry
- Connect and grow the creative workforce
- Advocate for investments that promote housing and transportation options

The strategy's goals are highly interrelated and work collectively to position Markham as a community that recognizes and leverages arts, culture and creativity to drive a sense of community, while encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship to build and support a diverse local economy with global connections.

Markham's economic target sectors include technology, with an emphasis on hardware, aiming to grow investments in semiconductors, automotive and medical hardware research and development, and manufacturing, while also expanding software and business management services for enterprises. Given that these sectors are based on a foundation of creative and innovative talent, Markham is aiming to grow its creative industries sector and looking to build opportunities around design, media and film production, as well as the arts.

Markham also recognizes the importance of a strong mix of local small businesses whose success is critical to creating complete and sustainable local neighbourhoods. Recognizing the important role community and quality of life play in attracting talent, the strategy integrates economic advancement with the preservation and enhancement of Markham's cultural vibrancy, leveraging synergies to enable a more resilient, vibrant, sustainable and prosperous community.

The strategy has been developed with the understanding that some initiatives are underway in the city. It represents an opportunity to build on past successes and momentum while aiming for the city's next level of strategic growth. It includes strategies for economic and cultural development, capitalizing on the synergies between them, for the coming five years and beyond. The strategy is a direct extension of the input and feedback received through an extensive consultation process with Markham's residents, businesses, education, community leaders and industry partners.





## **Goal 1: Focus on global and export-oriented business development**

All of Markham's target sectors operate within global value chains, involving multiple stages of production, from research and development to design, manufacturing, marketing and distribution. This allows Markham's businesses to access global inputs and take advantage of cost efficiencies and economies of scale. They also provide opportunities to integrate into the global economy, leading to job creation and economic growth.

Markham's manufacturing and export-oriented industries are being affected and transformed by technological advancements such as automation and digitalization. While this has positive impacts including improved efficiency and flexibility, the ripples of the pandemic still remain. Supply chain disruptions and geopolitical tensions continue to expose vulnerabilities in these industries. As a result, there is a growing interest in diversifying production strategies and building resilience. Markham has an opportunity to take advantage of these changes by attracting FDI focused on supplier diversification, reshoring, and local production with an emphasis on exporting.

Markham is well positioned to attract FDI due to its location, anchor firms, demographic composition and the existence of a vast pool of skilled talent. Opportunities exist to support the investment aspirations of Markham's target sectors through targeted investment attraction marketing campaigns and pursuit of global markets. Stakeholder consultations identify that it is important to showcase the community's strengths and capabilities to a wider audience, through strategic messaging and branding efforts, both nationally and internationally. Markham should target participation in industry conferences, trade shows, and business summits, to raise awareness of the city's economic potential and foster stronger relationships with other economic development organizations in the region, such as Toronto Global and York Region.

Markham also needs to address the gaps in employment lands. A lack of available and shovel-ready employment lands deters investors who are ready to build, while high land prices may discourage investment from some manufacturers that are integral to the supply chain. Furthermore, the supply of specific talent requirements in the semi-conductor industry are expected to intensify as investment in this sector grows.

Markham can work with partners to increase export capacity and market access. Pursuing FDI will support the existing base of businesses while securing future growth. Enhancing the pool of talent through skills development, improving labour force mobility, and focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion will support the flow of FDI into Markham's advanced technologies sectors.

### The evidence

- Markham is home to approximately 54,000 businesses, including more than 400 corporate multinational headquarters and 1,500 tech and life sciences companies. In 2019, Markham's economy generated \$27.6B in foreign and external domestic revenue, representing a third of all York Region's exports.
- Markham is the nucleus of Canada's largest semiconductor cluster. With major industry supports such as ventureLAB's Hardware Catalyst Initiative and Canada's Semiconductor Council, Markham can lead the positioning of Canada as a global developer, manufacturer and supplier of semiconductor products throughout the global realignment of supply chains.
- With a robust economy and diverse mix of export-based employment sectors, Markham continues to be highly attractive to new businesses and investors on international and national levels. Although the United States and Europe currently lead FDI, Asia and Southeast Asia represent FDI potential considering Markham's demographic composition and the growing business presence from these areas.



## Strategic objectives

The focus on global and export-oriented business development involves these strategic objectives:

### **Foster FDI opportunities that support the growth of Markham's target sectors**

Markham has a competitive advantage in the technology hardware sector, specifically in the semiconductor and automotive sub-sectors. Sector-specific FDI strategies are required to promote Markham's value proposition to potential investors. Business attraction efforts aimed at existing and emerging markets (United States, Europe, Asia and Southeast Asia) can generate business development and FDI leads.

Strategies should align with existing Toronto Global, Province of Ontario and York Region efforts and include marketing campaigns with key messaging for use in official speeches, conferences, trade missions and promotional materials. This could include promoting Markham's position as one of the most diverse cities in Canada and leveraging the respected ethnic business associations prominent in the GTA. Building on these relationships will form an understanding of the city's current market position and its ability to tap these export markets and increase FDI.

### **Support the development of infrastructure and incentives to encourage investment attraction**

Markham's reputation as a high-tech center can attract businesses to vacant and future employment lands, accelerating economic growth. To support new investments, the City needs to expand its available serviced employment lands for manufacturing. Official Plan policies that recognize the importance of employment lands to the community's future economic growth are critical, as well as supporting the expediting of industrial and office focused development applications. A review of industrial and commercial real estate inventory, developing a premier site program for the MiX, offering financial incentives and developing community improvement plans can secure Markham's position as a leader in its target sectors.

Establishing a soft-landing space and programming can incentivize further FDI development. Investors require up-to-date information about existing and future employment lands, shovel-ready sites, and accelerated development processes. Enabling higher-order, single-tenant use, integrated multi-purpose facilities is essential. Employment nodes along the 404 corridor north and high-density mixed-use communities will remain important for accommodating employment, office and mixed-use employment activities. Property owners and developers can help expedite development applications and revitalize employment corridors within older employment parks (i.e., Denison, Steeles-404 corridor, etc.). Infrastructure and broadband connectivity are crucial for new and existing business parks.

### **Support business growth through the facilitation of export and trade opportunities**

Markham can boost export development and supply chain integration by supporting businesses in key sectors with programs to increase their export capacity and market access. Such programs can be developed and delivered in partnership with trade and industry organizations to leverage Markham's international alliances and attendance at FDI-focused activities in international markets.

## **Goal 2: Enable a critical concentration of businesses through incubation, expansion and retention**

Markham recognizes the importance of supporting and promoting local businesses through effective communication and streamlined processes. This involves a collaborative approach that promote programs and grants to support local businesses, as well as providing access to data and resources that can help businesses navigate complex approval processes.

A formalized BR&E program can help Markham's target sectors thrive and grow by providing opportunities for owners and managers to share plans with local municipal leadership. The most successful BR&E programs have dedicated staff who meet regularly with businesses to identify and remove obstacles that hinder growth, recognize partnership and diversification opportunities in local and regional supply chains, promote sectors more effectively, and connect companies to funding opportunities that support expansion or productivity advancement.

BR&E programs can also serve as important drivers of business attraction. Large and high-growth businesses within Markham's ecosystem usually have extensive supply chains and can be essential sources of new investment leads. Ongoing communication with existing businesses can stimulate expansion and investment opportunities from established foreign-owned firms and those supplying goods and services to Markham businesses. Given that recent market demand on Markham's employment lands has been increasingly driven by growth in the knowledge-based or creative class economies, the City is uniquely positioned to launch a dedicated BR&E program to support Markham's arts and culture sector, specifically in the film and creative industries sector.

Despite the aims of BR&E programs, business growth may be limited by external factors (like the impact of global supply chain disruptions) or local conditions (such as the effect of limited availability of industrial spaces on expansion opportunities). Other challenges affecting BR&E efforts include the dampening effect of economic slowdown, with many businesses deciding to downsize or delay expansions, and post-pandemic shifts that have increased remote working, reducing demand for office space and disrupting retail markets that depended on proximal office workers. For those businesses that are considering expansion plans, awareness of potential supports may prove instrumental to moving forward.

Initiating BR&E programs can be challenging as many businesses may be hesitant about government involvement. It's important to emphasize the confidentiality of conversations and promptly respond to requests for information or support. Developing positive relationships throughout the local economy can help improve the overall business ecosystem and make it more attractive for new investments.



### The evidence

- Markham accounts for 29% of York Region’s employment base and is a thriving economy driven by professional services, finance, manufacturing and technology firms and is a preferred destination for knowledge-based and creative industries.
- The creative industries sector employs more than 19,500 people in Markham, approximately 10% of all jobs in the city. More than 6,200 jobs in “architectural, engineering and related services” account for the largest segment (34%) of creative industries jobs.
- As of 2019, Markham received \$27.6B through foreign and external domestic sources. This represents 33% of all York Region’s exports (\$83.2B).
- Just over a quarter (26%) of creative industries businesses are in the growing “accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services” sub-sector. Jobs in motion picture and video industries are projected to grow by 18% over the next five years.
- Markham provides a range of services and programs to support its diverse economy, including entrepreneurs and small businesses. The Markham Small Business Centre (MSBC) provides one-on-one management consulting, educational training and resources to support business growth.
- The MSBC works with Markham’s youth, positioning entrepreneurship as a career option.
- Partners including the Markham Board of Trade, YSpace, ventureLAB, and Seneca HELIX, are central players in supporting business networking and community building.



## Strategic objectives

Enabling a critical concentration of businesses in Markham involves these strategic objectives:

### **Increase capacity and invest in resources for a more formalized BR&E approach**

Markham can strengthen connections and better understand barriers and opportunities for business growth by establishing a formalized outreach and visitation program that includes a 'sector leadership team' for sub-sectors of focus, specifically semiconductors, automotive technologies and creative industries.

The BR&E outreach and visitation program should leverage existing connections with the business community, identifying shared challenges, informing the City on priorities, and initiating collaborative action. It should include after-care protocols with firms that choose to invest in the community, identifying pain points for improvement in process. Data collected through the program should be standardized and collected in Markham's client relationship management system. Staff should regularly engage with York University and Seneca Polytechnic to convey business concerns and support collaborative education programming.

### **Support business growth through enhanced approvals processes and infrastructure investment**

Industrial and commercial property assessments offer a vital contribution to the local tax base, supporting the financial sustainability of municipalities. Facilitating investment in expansions of existing business locations increases property assessments more rapidly, and often with less difficulty, than either greenfield or brownfield investment.

Markham's Development Facilitation Office should continue to refine processes to accelerate planning applications for industrial and key commercial developments, such as office and hotel projects. Streamlining the development process should include continued support of e-permitting.

The faster speeds, improved security, and robust reliability of broadband connectivity are essential infrastructure for existing and new businesses. Artificial intelligence, cloud storage and collaboration, e-commerce, and video conferencing have increased the bandwidth needed by most modern businesses. The City should work with telecommunication companies and other levels of government to ensure broadband connectivity is available in all business parks.

### **Support business networking and community building**

Markham should deliver, sponsor and promote business events focused on promoting community building, information sharing, and training. Events could be delivered through existing and new partnerships, such as the Markham Board of Trade and other business associations, ventureLAB's HardTech Summit as well as through the City's economic development team. Efforts should be guided by DEI principles to ensure that minority-owned businesses are aware of business support events and have the tools and supports to access them.

### Goal 3: Enhance the entrepreneurship, innovation and commercialization ecosystem

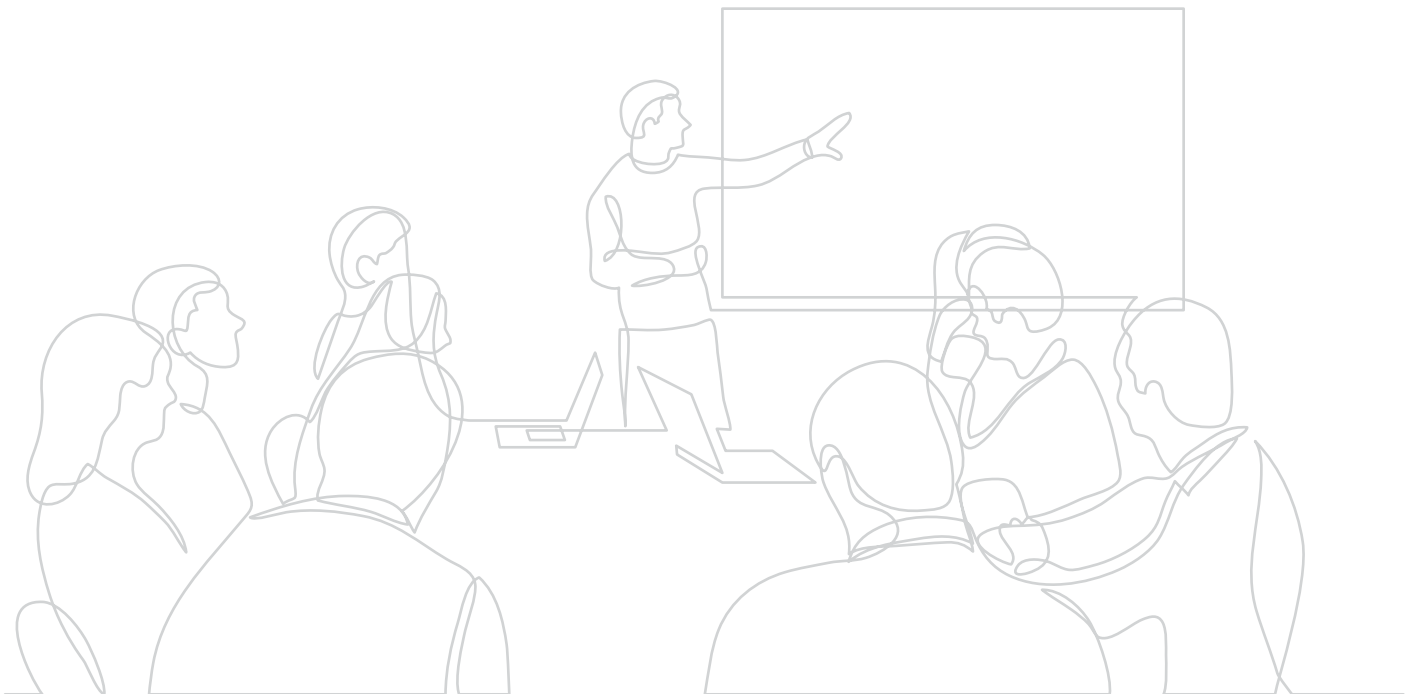
Markham has a well-rounded ecosystem with a wide range of start-up and entrepreneurship services for business owners including ventureLAB, YSpace at York University, Seneca HELIX, and the MSBC. As the vision for the MiX comes to completion, Markham will be home to Ontario's first innovation cluster that connects knowledge and production sectors, fostering innovation at scale with critical mass<sup>31</sup>.

Enhancing the entrepreneurship, innovation and commercialization ecosystem is a strategic goal for Markham, as it connects and enables a global economy and a critical concentration of businesses. An interconnected network of organizations, individuals, and resources can support the creation and growth of new businesses and the commercialization of innovative products and services. Partners from industry, academia, community and government organizations can support business through funding, mentorship, training, and access to networks and markets. Access to venture capital is crucial for start-ups to grow and scale. It will be critical to connect the ecosystem with this source of funding to support business growth and competitiveness.

Additionally, as organizations within the ecosystem grow and evolve, they may find that their focus areas begin to overlap with existing services and programs in Markham. This can create challenges around resource allocation and coordination, as different organizations may be working toward similar goals in slightly different ways. To address these challenges, it will be important for Markham's entrepreneurial ecosystem to be intentional in its support for diverse entrepreneurs. This means ensuring that resources

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<sup>31</sup> Markham is creating an innovation hub the size of roughly 600 soccer fields, its mayor says | CBC News [www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/markham-innovation](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/markham-innovation)



and programs are accessible to all entrepreneurs, regardless of their background or stage of development. By doing so, the ecosystem can help to promote greater inclusion and diversity, which can in turn help to attract new entrepreneurs to the city.

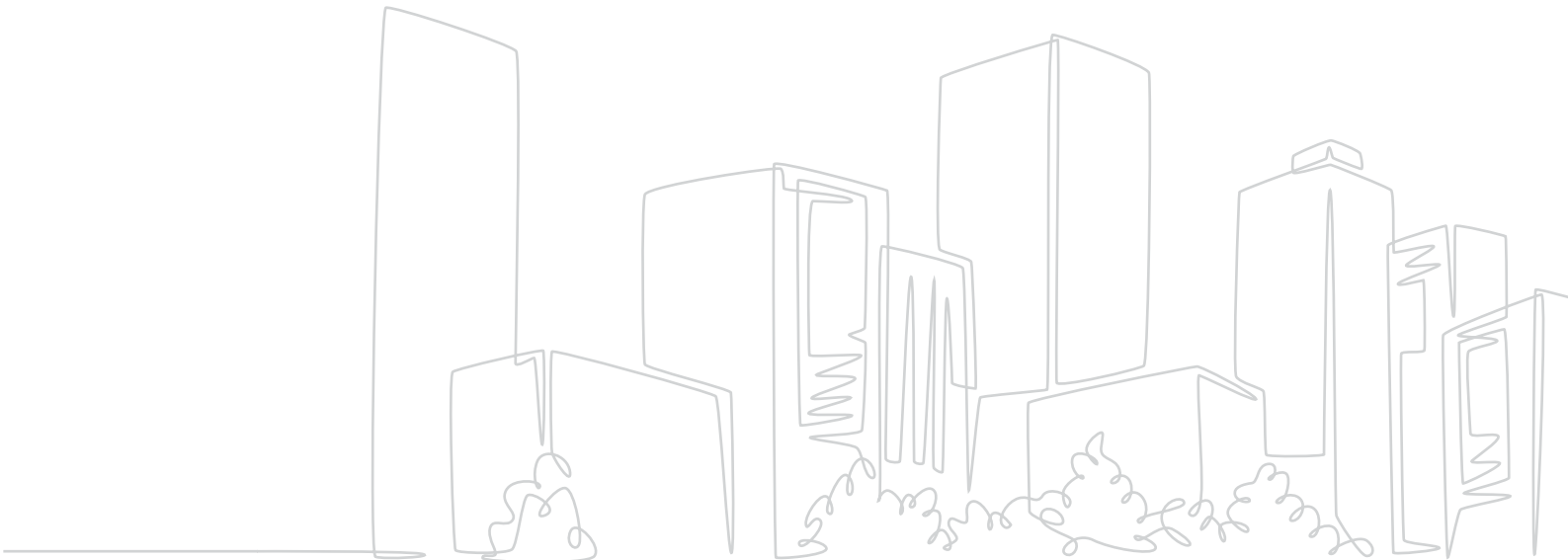
Markham has the opportunity to expand its current network of services and resources to support the creation and growth of new businesses and the commercialization of innovative products and services. Strategic focus areas include working with local and regional bodies and investing in accelerator and incubator programming that complements target sectors, including semiconductors, hardware, automotive and the creative industries.

Consultation insights identify that Markham needs to encourage and celebrate entrepreneurship by highlighting success stories, organizing events and creating a supportive environment for start-ups. There is a need to invest in education and training programs to support entrepreneurs in developing the skills they need to succeed. This is of paramount importance to the creative workforce as they identify the need for support programming such as sales development skills, business networking and business-to-business matchmaking.

Markham's focus on enhancing the entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem requires positioning Markham Centre as a creative innovation district and the MiX as Canada's premier destination for hardware manufacturing.

### The evidence

- With ventureLAB, York University's YSpace, and Seneca Polytechnic's HELIX, Markham is home to three incubators providing support to entrepreneurs.
- ventureLAB features Canada's only semiconductor and hardware-focused accelerator program, providing a unique market positioning that should be further supported and grown.
- The City of Markham has set aside a 1,920-acre plot of undeveloped employment lands for the MiX to optimize the innovation and tech ecosystem and attract knowledge-intensive hardware-focused industries.





## Strategic objectives

Enhancing the entrepreneurship, innovation and commercialization ecosystem in Markham involves these strategic objectives:

### **Work with local and regional bodies to enable innovation and entrepreneurship in Markham**

Markham should build on its already strong innovation ecosystem by establishing an Innovation Council to identify and deliver local, regional and international collaborations that will support entrepreneurs and promote Markham's innovation community.

Working with Markham's three business incubators, the City should invest in enhanced accelerator and incubator programming for target sectors, while positioning Markham as Canada's nucleus for hardware and semiconductor innovation start-ups. Programming might include open innovation challenges to solve civic and private sector problems through new products or developments.

### **Realize Markham Centre's potential as a creative innovation district**

Building a critical mass of creators, entrepreneurs, businesses, residents and activities is central to ensuring Markham Centre realizes its potential as an innovation district. Development of Markham Centre should include growth of YSpace, relocation of ventureLAB and its hardware lab, the continued growth York University, along with establishment of a creative incubator space to support arts and culture entrepreneurs. Markham Centre should also be used as a living-lab technology demonstration zone for automotive, mobility, sustainability and property technology solutions that can improve the quality of life of residents.

To attract a critical mass of creative industry and technology companies, the City should develop and launch a targeted marketing campaign, while working with property owners to attract a unique mix of street level retailers and office tenants. This initiative should happen in tandem with visitor attraction efforts and the development of events and activities to draw people to Markham Centre. The potential for a multi-use event facility that could add to the density and diversity of activities taking place within the community should also be explored.

### **Establish the Markham Innovation Exchange (MiX) as Canada's premier destination for hardware manufacturing**

Markham should develop a marketing and government relations plan that is focused on attracting a diverse mix of creative industries and hardware-focused manufacturing and technologies in the semiconductor, automotive, energy and sustainability sectors. An anchor innovation space is needed to support collaboration and start-up businesses in the MiX.

Given the demand for employment lands, the City should invest in and expedite servicing for Phase 1 of the MiX. This should be supported by a new secondary plan that considers sustainability elements, including materials exchange between companies, low-impact development, green buildings, incorporation of natural areas, incorporation of renewable and district energy solutions, and the efficient use of land resources.



Markham Civic Centre rotunda at night

## Goal 4: Galvanize a creative ecosystem

The arts and culture ecosystem in Markham includes many dimensions: city-run institutions, independent artists, arts workers, community groups, festivals, and creative businesses. As such, initiatives targeting these various dimensions are needed to effectively support the sector, from direct service delivery, promotion, capacity building, facilitating connections and audience development.

The Varley Art Gallery, Markham Museum and Flato Markham Theatre serve as key hubs for cultural activity within the city. These institutions are critical to the overall ecosystem and have vital roles to play in bringing artistic and cultural experiences to the citizens of Markham. They also can act as catalysts to bring together artists and creatives, and drive growth across the whole sector. As such, continued investment in appropriate funding and resources for these facilities will support the overall success for arts and culture in Markham.

Beyond the three facilities, Markham also has many individual artists, arts organizations, and a creative talent pool critical to growing a thriving sector. But there are noted challenges around retaining creative talent in Markham, with the cost of living and competition from Toronto and other locations across the GTA. Ensuring a visible and viable career ladder for professional artists and creative jobs in Markham must be addressed. Artists in Markham report challenges around easily connecting into networks, finding opportunities, events or each other. Facilitating such connections and building those networks helps to strengthen local ties and exposes people to local opportunities. The City of Markham provides funding and support for arts and culture activities through the Celebrate Markham grant program, but there is an opportunity to facilitate capacity building for artists and arts organizations more consistently, to allow them to grow, and by extension retain and hire more staff.

Another critical aspect for success in the sector is infrastructure. There is a diverse range of space found in Markham in general (e.g., formal venues, informal venues, outdoor spaces, etc.). However, artists indicate a critical need for more performance and/or exhibition space, as well as a lack of affordable spaces. Current facilities also report limitations with their space. As the population in Markham continues to grow, along with the community's desire for more arts programming, planning for future space needs is necessary for long term growth.

Audiences are a key piece of a thriving arts and culture sector. Markham has a community that is actively interested in a variety of arts and culture experiences and opportunities. But there are challenges around where and how to find information about the breadth of arts and culture activities on offer. The City can support the growth of local arts audiences through more coordinated and strategic arts promotion. With the aforementioned strengths and challenges in mind, there is a need to galvanize the creative ecosystem, to stimulate Markham's arts and culture sector by breaking down silos, facilitating more collaboration and elevating all the great activity already happening in the city. With a particular focus on actions to grow awareness; increase visibility and density; ensure adequate processes and infrastructure; celebrate cultural diversity; and connect and grow the creative workforce, Markham can encourage the growth of a thriving arts and culture sector. The objectives and actions within this goal will help artists grow in their careers, connect audiences with arts activities, increase community cohesion, and cultivate civic pride.

### The evidence

- Markham has some 440 mappable arts and culture assets that include creative and cultural organizations, creative cultural enterprises, cultural sites and installations, education and training institutions, festivals and events, arts and cultural organizations (e.g., performing arts, visual arts, etc.), and cultural spaces.
- Three city-run cultural institutions:
  - The 527-seat theatre Flato Markham Theatre operates at full capacity with 350 events a year.
  - The 25-acre open air Markham Museum has a collection of 80,000 artefacts, specimens, images and archival materials and offers year-round programming across their expansive indoor and outdoor space.
  - Markham's investment in professional arts includes operation of The Varley Art Gallery.
- Two Public Art Policies (for Municipal and Private Sector projects) that encourage up to 1% of investment in public art from the construction costs of City capital projects and private developments.
- A diverse and growing population.
- An integrated approach (Destination Markham, the three city-run arts institutions, and events and festivals all under the umbrella of Economic Development, Culture and Entrepreneurship).





## Strategic objectives

Galvanizing a creative ecosystem in Markham involves these strategic objectives:

### **Increase visibility and density of arts and culture in Markham**

Markham has many arts and culture assets across the city, from artists, to arts organizations, creative businesses, and cultural institutions. Markham can raise the profile and think more strategically about where and how art is presented in the community, to contribute to community vibrancy and cohesion.

When looking at where Markham's cultural assets are currently located, there are certainly areas where arts and culture assets (spaces, businesses, etc.) appear clustered together<sup>32</sup>. These include the main heritage districts of Markham Village, Unionville and Buttonville/ Browns Corner, and strategic focus can help grow these clusters even more. The northern part of the city has limited and sparse arts and culture assets. Increasing density across the city, as well as bringing art and culture to areas where there is less of it can be achieved through this objective. The three city-run culture facilities are spread across the city, which allows more of the population to be close to a cultural space but does limit opportunities for audiences to stumble upon art or cultural experiences.

The City has structures and policies in place related to public art - a *Public Art Master Plan* and two existing public art policies (for municipal and private sector projects) that encourage up to 1% of investment in public art from the construction costs of City capital projects and private developments. These initiatives provide an excellent monetary and policy-based foundation from which to increase the visibility of talent in the city, support artists with paid opportunities for exposure, and passively expose Markham residents to art. Public art has a vital role to play in placemaking; the intentional shaping of public space can create dynamic areas for the community to enjoy and gather.

### **Develop supports and infrastructure to attract investments in film production**

As film and television production levels in Ontario are growing, demand for studio space, film locations, production and post-production services is also increasing<sup>33</sup>. Markham can tap into this growth and the high concentration of that activity in the GTA, leveraging the high cost of space in Toronto-proper to bring production/post-production businesses up to Markham as well as invest in studio development to address the increasing demand for studio space.

Markham has an opportunity to capitalize on investments in film production through targeted marketing, highlighting locations such as Unionville, Main Street Markham, and Markham Museum as ideal for filming. Investing in film production can enable Markham to promote its unique character and culture to a wider audience and help to build the municipality's brand to attract more visitors and investors. It can enable the growth of the local sector, including a diversity of innovative productions, enrich its cultural landscape, and foster a sense of community pride. In addition to Markham as a filming location, the City can continue to promote and support the attraction of film studio investments, in alignment with growth being seen across the Greater Toronto Area in terms of density of film production studios. Markham can leverage the high cost of space in Toronto proper to bring production and post-production businesses up to Markham as well as invest in studio development to address the increasing demand for studio space.

<sup>32</sup> Please see the full interactive [Cultural Asset map here](#). More information can be found in "What We Learned: Markham's Market Analysis and Competitive Position".

<sup>33</sup> [2022-film-and-television-production-statistics-background-final.pdf](#) ontariocreates.ca

**Build a sense of community and joint mission in Markham's arts and culture sector**

Artists and those who work in the arts require opportunities to connect and learn from one another. Many arts and culture organizations, groups, services, programs, and initiatives exist throughout Markham, but currently there is not a lot of blending, sharing or collaboration occurring across the community.

The City of Markham's *2020-2023 Strategic Plan* includes an objective around "supporting arts, culture, recreation and sport", but targeted City leadership and prioritization of the arts is important to ensure the key activities are properly supported. The City can play a vital role in facilitating connections across the arts community. Leading networking events and developing mentorship and peer-to-peer programs will support such cross-sectoral sharing and community building. By formally creating programs to facilitate such connections, artists can grow their individual networks, share expertise, and ultimately collectively build capacity across the sector.

**Grow awareness of Markham's arts and culture through improved marketing and collaboration**

An important element of growing arts and culture in Markham is ensuring that residents know about all the opportunities to engage with arts and culture related activities and initiatives in the city. Community consultations revealed there is currently a limited view of everything happening in Markham, as well as a lack of awareness of where the cultural facilities are and what they have to offer. Additionally, increasing public awareness of local arts and culture was revealed as one of the top priorities in terms of supporting arts and culture from the community survey.

As many arts organizations in Markham lack the capacity or resources to promote and market all their programs on their own, there is a role for the City to play in terms of elevating a variety of arts and culture activities and initiatives. Developing dedicated arts and culture promotional opportunities, such as a newsletter, can help increase awareness. Additionally, integrated strategies across the three city-run culture facilities can help to collectively boost awareness – taking advantage of cross-promotional opportunities to expand awareness to new audiences.

**Renew and reinvigorate Markham Museum's role and reimagine it as a community and cultural destination**

The Markham Museum is a 25-acre open air community museum made up of 30 modern and historic structures that examine Markham and the surrounding area through settlement development. The museum has a collection of 80,000 artefacts, specimens, images and archival materials. The site offers a wide variety of year-round programming, events and rental opportunities across their expansive indoor and outdoor spaces (e.g., students camps, public programming, exhibitions).

As one of the three City-run cultural institutions, the Markham Museum can play a vital role in fostering community pride by preserving the past and celebrating Markham's living history for residents and visitors. Through greater collaboration between the Museum and various other local (as well as regional) arts organizations, libraries, education institutions, and businesses, the Museum can further integrate itself into the community. By expanding

the collection (particularly to ensure representation of Markham's diversity), envisioning the full potential of the facility, and growing engagement with the community through exhibitions and partnerships, the Museum can cement itself as a central element of Markham's cultural identity.

### **Grow and expand live theatre opportunities in Markham**

The Flato Markham Theatre has been one of the City's leading cultural assets for almost 40 years. The facility is home to a 527-seat theatre that offers programming, performances, and venue rentals throughout the year.

The Flato is where the Markham community, as well as audiences from across the region, come to experience the performing arts. The theatre has a role to play in supporting the development of diverse homegrown talent, as well as providing cultural experiences for audiences, both of which contribute to the growth of the Flato as the home for performing arts in the region. The theatre's current space is quite small, which limits the types of programming they can host and touring performers they can attract. Additionally, the space reportedly does not meet accessibility needs and cannot easily be retrofitted. Artists and arts workers who were consulted in the development of this strategy reported that "performance/exhibition space and facilities" was the most critical need for arts and culture to thrive in Markham. As such, there is an opportunity to expand the capabilities of the Flato to support not only Markham's growth as a destination to engage with the performing arts, but also to grow performing arts talent in Markham and meet the needs of the current artistic community.

### **Maximize the Varley Art Gallery's capacity as an arts hub**

As a professional public art gallery located right in the heart of downtown Unionville, The Varley serves as an accessible access point for the community to engage with visual art. From its open courtyard to educational programming, events, and exhibitions, the gallery brings exemplary visual art to Markham residents and visitors.

There is a leadership role The Varley can play in facilitating a downstream effect, exposing people to professional art to inspire them to want to engage further with the arts. By envisioning the Varley as an arts hub, an accessible space for the community to experience art, the gallery can play a vital role in inspiring future artists and growing the community's appreciation for art overall.







L-R: Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Anik Glaude, Curator and Program Coordinator, Varley Art Gallery, Don Kwan, Artist, and Markham-Unionville MPP Paul Chiang standing in front of Kwan's vinyl mural "Quiet Resistance, Reclaiming Space."



## Goal 5: Invest in our people and places

Markham's economic development and culture success is dependent on the City's ability to dedicate resources toward improving quality of life for its residents and the overall livability of the community. This can take many forms, such as improving infrastructure, focusing on community-based and placemaking initiatives, and supporting social programs.

Markham's people and cultural diversity are its strengths. The city is a vibrant and rapidly growing community, with a remarkable 82% of the population self-identifying as visible minorities. Markham ranks first on the *Tolerance Index*<sup>34</sup> among comparable communities, including Toronto, Mississauga, Richmond Hill and Oakville. This diversity brings together unique perspectives and ideas and allows for the exchange of cultural traditions and practices, which can lead to greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures. Markham is a talent hub. Its residents are known for their high levels of creativity and productivity, performing jobs in research and development, equipment design, processes, computer applications, marketing and quality management related operations.

Markham's diversity is reflected in its arts and culture offerings, which are enriched by the contributions of its citizens. With more than 200 City-delivered and partner-organized events and festivals each year, the city is rich with cultural offerings. However, community activities are often siloed. There is an opportunity for more cross-cultural integration to facilitate shared experiences for residents, to spread the word more effectively about arts and culture events and opportunities that exist in Markham and to grow awareness that community events and facilities are open and accessible to everyone. Streamlining processes and encouraging more collaboration for community groups will help to bring more opportunities to more people across the city.

For Markham, investing in its people and places includes the recognition that economic development through arts and culture extends beyond the revenue generated through professional arts and culture organizations. Arts and culture can contribute to a sense of place, improving public spaces and creating cultural hubs to attract new residents, businesses and investment. Opportunities exist to support small main street and retail businesses, the arts and culture sector, and creative entrepreneurs as they contribute to the city's economic growth by creating jobs, generating revenue, and supporting local suppliers. Arts and culture initiatives also support resident attraction and retention efforts, as people want to live in a vibrant and complete community with a wide variety of service offerings and amenities.

Enhancing downtown areas and other retail zones through cultural programming and placemaking are effective ways to increase customer activity, while events and festivals that attract visitors from outside the area can bring in additional revenue for hotels, restaurants and shops. Aside from the direct economic impacts, hosting events and festivals raises Markham's profile in attracting new businesses and investment, as companies want to be located where people want to live.

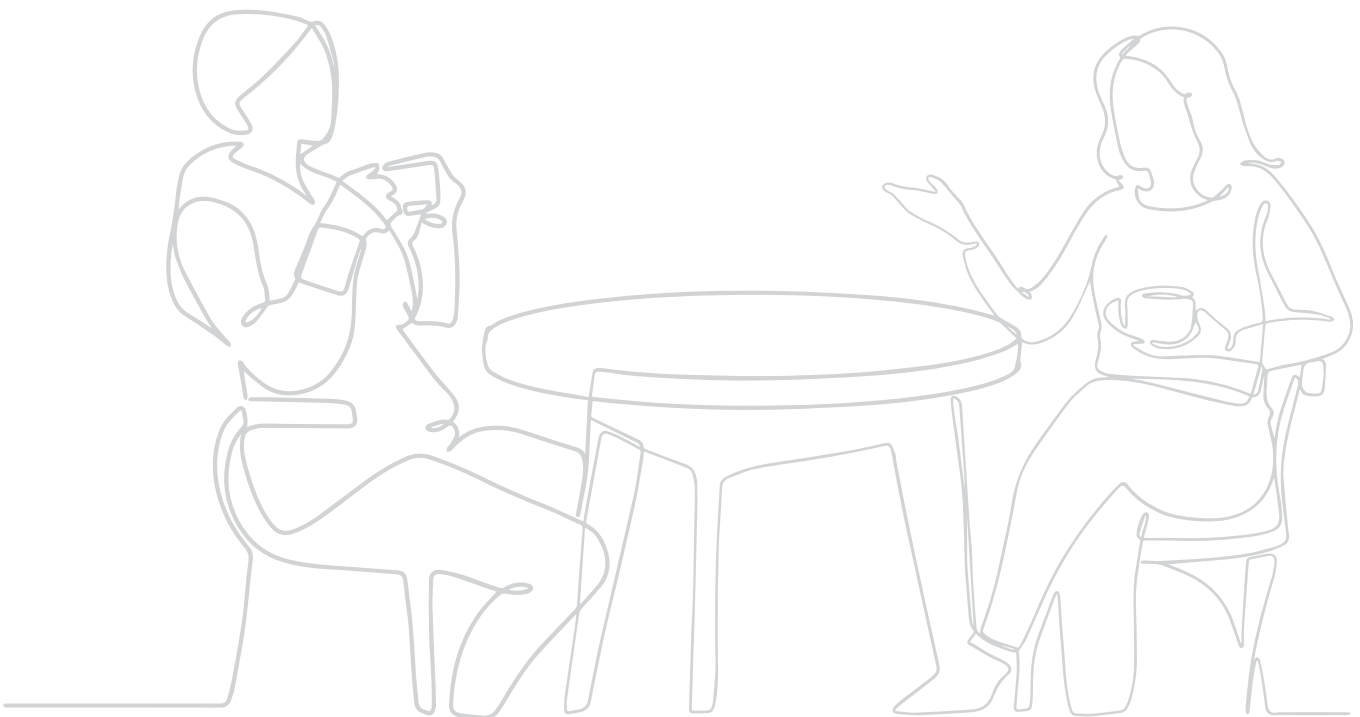
<sup>34</sup> The tolerance index is an overall ranking of the selected comparable communities and peer regions based on how well they score on each indicator. For the tolerance index, four indicator scores are calculated: share of the population by a visible minority, the share of the population by immigrant status, the share of the female labour force, and the share of the population speaking unofficial languages at home.

### The evidence

- Markham is home to approximately 338,503 residents and is strongly positioned as a growth community with a highly diverse, prosperous, and educated resident population.
- When considering the *Talent Index*, Markham ranks second behind the City of Ottawa and ahead of most GTHA communities including Toronto, Vaughan, Brampton, and Hamilton.
- The retail sector is a vital component of economic diversification, particularly supporting resident demands. Support for the retail sector is evident through the 2014 Official Plan, which states that “retail and service sectors are important components of a complete community and a strong economy”.
- According to *Canadian Business Counts*<sup>35</sup>, Markham has more than 38,000 businesses operated by self-employed individuals with no employees, more than 10,000 businesses with 1-4 employees, and almost 2,500 businesses with 5-9 employees. Together, these three small business categories account for approximately 94% of all businesses in Markham.
- The retail sector accounted for 9% of Markham’s total jobs.
- Through the City’s events program, Markham delivers and supports more than 200 community events each year.

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35 Lightcast, 2022 | Canadian Business Counts, June 2022



## Strategic objectives

Investing in Markham's people and places involves ten strategic objectives, organized into five themes:

### **Support community-based business formation and healthy commercial centres**

Markham can support establishing and growing traditional small businesses by providing consultation support and networking opportunities. Resources such as trade area information and digital adoption programs should be provided to help businesses increase sales and profitability. In partnership with BIAs, the City can facilitate additional supports for small businesses to offset disruptions expected during planned transportation infrastructure developments.

To ensure a healthy mix of retail, Markham should identify retail and service gaps in core areas such as Unionville, Main Street Markham and the Yonge Street corridor, and support local entrepreneurs in developing businesses where gaps exist. Working with community partners can encourage people from equity-deserving groups to participate in business start-up programs. Opportunities also exist to support employment and retail in the City's key development areas such as Markham Road – Mount Joy, Milliken, Markville, etc.

Markham can further advocate for equitable business development efforts by establishing a municipal social procurement framework to leverage municipal purchases to improve economic, social, or environmental well-being, improve access for micro, small businesses and/or social enterprises, and promote innovation.

### **Strengthen culture through collaboration and capacity building**

The City of Markham's three cultural venues can enhance their cultural offerings and broaden audiences by developing coordinated programming, identifying opportunities for shared administrative and sponsorship processes, and streamlining volunteer recruitment and retention.

Co-produced programming representative of Markham's cultural diversity presents an opportunity to feature art forms and stories from diverse cultural backgrounds, the LGBT+ community and people with disabilities, creating inclusive spaces for all and fostering a sense of belonging. By establishing a cross-sectoral "in residence" program and contributing to professional development in the culture sector, Markham can facilitate enhanced capacity of these organizations.

### **Develop and promote downtown areas and retail destinations**

Markham's vibrant downtown areas and retail destinations can be further developed through placemaking, destination marketing and business development supports. Coordination of efforts with adjacent neighbourhoods should be considered to leverage resources and broaden reach.

Public art installations and activations should be incorporated in Markham's downtowns and other retail areas to animate lively and attractive public spaces. These should

complement placemaking initiatives usually seen in vibrant retail areas to improve streetscapes, such as moveable outdoor furniture, tree canopy and decorative banners, as well as events, festivals and community activations. Beautification of downtown areas supports promotion of film production opportunities and marketing of an area to event planners.

Retailers in these areas would benefit from Markham's leadership in conducting a retail mix analysis to identify gaps and attract complementary businesses, amenities (such as boutique hotels) and attractions. A retail mix analysis can also inform destination marketing strategies that promote the unique cultural and culinary experiences found in each retail area.

### **Increase the quantity and quality of events through enhanced supports and collaboration**

Festivals and events can support the vibrancy of downtowns and other retail areas. Markham's downtown areas and municipal facilities should be promoted as a destination for public and private events, with support from enhanced amenity information and streamlined booking systems. Guidelines and by-laws can provide clear direction on the capabilities and requirements for each type of event and facility. Additional City staff resources might help some festival organizers plan, organize and execute their events more effectively.

Markham should consider forming a working group to encourage cross-festival programming and to identify opportunities to integrate cultural facilities into downtown events. Given the tourism draw and economic impact of major community festivals, the City should invest in additional event funding for both City-delivered and partner-organized events. Additional funding and program criteria should also be considered for cultural programming that aligns with Markham's Diversity Action Plan. Administration of event grant programs should be reviewed to determine whether partner cultural organizations could assume a grant delivery role.

### **Ensure current and future workforce needs are met**

To ensure a better understanding of local and regional labour market issues, Markham should strengthen working relationships with the Workforce Planning Board of York Region (WPBYR) and promote its services and resources to businesses, associations, industry partners and education partners. Working groups should be formed to increase engagement between businesses and post-secondary institutions and advise on curriculum and program offerings so labour force needs will be met in coming years. These groups can also facilitate formal relationships between employers and educators to connect students with employers in Markham's priority sectors. Workforce planning should also consider availability of transit and housing options, and the City should advocate for options that meet the needs of employers and workers.



# Actioning Impact: Strategic Action Plan

The 2023 to 2027 Economic Development and Culture Strategy is underpinned by five strategic goals, intended to anchor and qualify all strategic initiatives and ensuing actions on the part of the City over the next five years and beyond. The goals support the City of Markham's overarching economic development and culture vision and the desired outcomes of the strategic planning process.

The actions outlined below emerged through comprehensive research analysis and feedback garnered through the consultation process. The list of actions is based on input and research at a point in time. New potential actions will emerge and will need to be assessed against the priorities of the Economic Development and Culture Strategy while some actions may be removed should they be deemed unfeasible if other activities pre-empt their effectiveness.

The implementation of these actions will require additional investments in City resources, programming and infrastructure, as well as support for community implementation partners. By implementing the priorities and actions, and achieving this Economic Development and Culture Strategy vision, Markham will be well-positioned to be a national leader in economic and cultural development.

## Actions

The direction the City, its partners and its stakeholders will undertake to tackle the essential issues or opportunities that should be addressed over the duration of the strategy.

## Service delivery areas

The service delivery areas include FDI, BR&E, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, arts and culture, talent and workforce, and community economic development. They are identified within each strategic goal and related action.

## Resources

The resources required (i.e., the capacity to implement given the current state).

## Potential lead and partners

The identification of select leads and internal/external partners that can support economic development and culture objectives.

### Legend

 Short Term (1-2 years)	 Critical Priority	 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)	 Community Economic Development
 Medium Term (2-4 years)	 High Priority	 Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E)	 Arts and Culture
 Longer Term (4+ years)	 Moderate Priority	 Innovation and Entrepreneurship	 Talent and Workforce

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Charlene Li, Co-Founder and CEO, and Vince Li, Co-Founder and President, of EATABLE at YSpace Markham

# Goal # 1: Focus on global and export-oriented business development

1.1

**Foster foreign direct investment opportunities that support the growth of Markham's target sectors**

## Develop sector-specific business attraction marketing campaigns

- Develop sector-specific marketing plans for semiconductor, hardware, automotive technologies, creative industries and higher-order business services and complementary supply chain businesses.
- Generate FDI leads by participating in targeted and highly impactful sector trade shows and conferences (domestic and global), while partnering with key stakeholders in marketing Markham, including York Region, Toronto Global, ventureLAB, York University and Seneca Polytechnic.
- Market and promote FDI success stories to inform existing firms and targets outside Canada of Markham's potential.
- Position the Mayor's Office to champion Markham's growth prospects in speeches, conferences, missions and other promotional activities.



## Encourage investments that position Markham as Canada's hub for semiconductor industry and related supply chain

- Develop a targeted government relations and marketing plan focused on sharing Markham's existing semiconductor sector, while identifying complimentary opportunities that can support its growth in the context of a global realignment of semiconductor supply chains.
- Engage in joint-marketing efforts that position ventureLAB's Hardware Catalyst Initiative as Canada's only innovation test bed and incubator for founders building hardware and semiconductor-focused products, while positioning ventureLAB as a soft-landing location for established semiconductor companies looking to expand research and development.
- Collaborate with York University on semiconductor related research projects and development of joint research grant applications involving industry.
- Explore with other levels of government the ability to incentivize the creation of an advanced semiconductor package and test facility, and/or specialized wafer-fab/lab that allows wafer level integration of technologies such as CMOS, GaN, MEMS, Photonics in conjunction with commercial, academic and eco-system partners. This would attract developers across North America and beyond and would integrate the City into the semiconductor manufacturing reshoring/friend-shoring initiatives.



### **Building on Markham's existing automotive technologies cluster, enable opportunities for continued growth through foreign direct investment**

- Work with York Region and partners to market Markham's automotive technology sector.
- Leverage U.S., Asian and European-based automotive and technology trade shows to build relationships with automotive technology related companies.
- Leverage the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN) programs and ventureLAB's Hardware Catalyst Initiative to support innovations and companies in Markham, including potential testing and demonstration of auto-mobility technologies.
- Facilitate research collaborations between Markham's automotive technology sector and York University.



### **Pursue United States markets for foreign direct investment with a focus on semiconductor, automotive, hardware, technology, business services and creative industries**

- The U.S. has been the largest source of Markham's FDI successes.
- Continue to work with Markham's FDI partners to focus on key sectors that can contribute to the community's strengths, including semiconductor, automotive, hardware, technology, business services and creative industries.
- Leverage U.S.-based trade shows, targeted sector outreach and lead generation, as well as partner relationships to identify FDI opportunities.



### **Pursue European markets for foreign direct investment with a focus on semiconductor, automotive, hardware, technology and business services**

- Europe has been Markham's second largest source of FDI.
- Continue to work with Markham's FDI partners to focus on key sectors that can contribute to the community's strengths, including semiconductor, automotive, hardware, technology and business services.
- Leverage European-based trade shows, targeted sector outreach and lead generation, as well as partner relationships to identify FDI opportunities.



### **Pursue South and Southeast Asia markets for foreign direct investment with a focus on semiconductor, automotive, technology and business service investments**

- Given Markham's demographic composition, Asia and Southeast Asia represent large FDI potential and have had a history of success in Markham.
- Continue to work with Markham's FDI partners to focus on key sectors that can contribute to the community's strengths, including semiconductor, automotive, hardware, technology and business services.
- Leverage the City's international alliances, Friendship Cities and bi-lateral business associations to develop relationships to identify FDI opportunities.
- Given the focus on diversifying supply chains and reshoring, Markham should leverage these relationships to focus on its target sectors.





## 1.2

## Support the development of infrastructure and incentives to encourage investment attraction

### Spur the development of employment lands and business parks

- Undertake a thorough review of the existing and future land inventory with a consideration of current and future market demand. This involves analyzing investment readiness considerations such as age, size, location, coverage, land-use, coverage, zoning, marketability, infrastructure marketability, infrastructure requirements, transportation and proximity to markets.
- Focus on vacant employment lands along 404 corridor North (including the Markham Innovation Exchange (MiX) and Markham East along Highway 7 (including the Markham Stouffville Hospital lands) and high-density designation mixed use communities (Markham Centre, Langstaff, Cornell) to spur industrial employment, office and mixed-use employment activities.
- Leverage Markham's newly established Development Facilitation Office to support critical industrial and commercial development applications to support new expansions and accelerate economic growth. Engage with property owners and developers to help expedite development applications that also help to vitalize and modernize employment corridors within older employment parks (i.e., Denison, Steeles-404 corridor, etc.).
- Work with the City's internal Planning Policy and Development Units to support the necessary changes to Markham's Official Plan policies and Zoning Bylaws to appropriately accommodate the new employment uses to facilitate new investments and economic growth.
- Review employment lands in Markham alongside Planning Policy Unit to develop a policy framework to protect employment lands in Markham that aligns with the City's employment trends and sectors of strength.



### Develop and promote a Premier Site Program for Markham Innovation Exchange (MiX)

- Launch targeted marketing efforts and opportunity book that promotes available lands and highlights Markham's long-term innovation commitment at the MiX to investors and businesses.
- Establish the MiX on a foundation of sustainability, utilizing it to market to hardware manufacturers and employers with a focus on Environmental Social Governance (ESG) principles.
- Review the feasibility of a MiX-specific Community Improvement Plan to incentivize investment in higher density non-residential development around the transit cores and sustainability elements.
- The City should invest in and expedite servicing for Phase #1 of the MiX in order to accelerate development and curate users to maximize economic and sustainability benefits.



### Develop targeted office-commercial incentive programs in Markham Centre and the Yonge Street Transit Corridor

- Advocate for the development of office development incentives in partnership with York Region for the Yonge Street Transit Corridor and Markham Centre.
- Support and encourage retention and attraction of employment in other strategic growth areas in the city such as the Milliken, Markville, and Markham Road – Mount Joy secondary plan areas.



### Support soft-landing space for international start-ups and SMEs

- To continue to assist international start-ups and SMEs in establishing a presence in Markham, focus on establishing and supporting soft-landing space and programming with YSpace and ventureLAB.



### Support the development of a corporate innovation program with ventureLAB, YSpace and Seneca HELIX

- Develop a corporate innovation program in partnership with ventureLAB, YSpace and Seneca HELIX focused on bringing international technology companies to Markham to explore solutions and new product opportunities.



## 1.3

### Support business growth through the facilitation of export and trade opportunities

#### Support export development and supply chain integration

- Work with the Markham Board of Trade on developing and delivering programming to support export readiness of key sectors within Markham.
- The program would leverage data and programming to encourage businesses to increase their export capacity and market access, while expanding local supply chains and import substitution.
- Information should identify an export-oriented business, an emerging export-oriented business, or a well-established export-oriented business



#### Organize international trade missions to support export development

- Leverage the City's attendance at FDI focused activities in international markets to also promote trade opportunities for local businesses in aligning sectors by building them into the program. This approach will provide an opportunity to utilize local sector leaders to promote not only trade, but also FDI opportunities in Markham.



# Goal # 2: Enable a critical concentration of businesses through incubation, expansion and retention

## 2.1

### Increase capacity and invest in resources for a more formalized BR&E approach

#### Implement sector-specific BR&E visitation programs to connect with and understand issues faced by local businesses in the community

- Implement a formalized BR&E visitation program focused on Markham's key sectors, including semiconductor, hardware, automotive technologies, creative industries and higher-order business services.
- Data collected through the program should be standardized and collected in Markham's CRM, with a specific focus on understanding barriers and opportunities for growth.

#### Position 'sector leadership teams' to brand and support investment in target sectors for each of Markham's four target sectors

- As part of the BR&E visitation programs, leverage existing connections with the business community to position sector leadership teams for each of the priority sectors.
- The teams will bring together a range of businesses to advise the City on priorities, identify shared challenges and initiate collaborative action.
- The team would regularly engage with York University, Seneca Polytechnic, and ventureLAB to review and understand business concerns, including skills mismatch and related challenges to inform on collaborative education programming.

## 2.2

### Support business growth through enhanced approvals processes and infrastructure investment

#### Support industrial and targeted commercial developments with enhanced development support

- Continue to refine and deliver Markham's Development Facilitation Office that is focused on accelerating planning applications for industrial and targeted commercial developments, such as office and hotel projects.
- Continue to support and promote the use of e-permitting to streamline the development process in Markham.

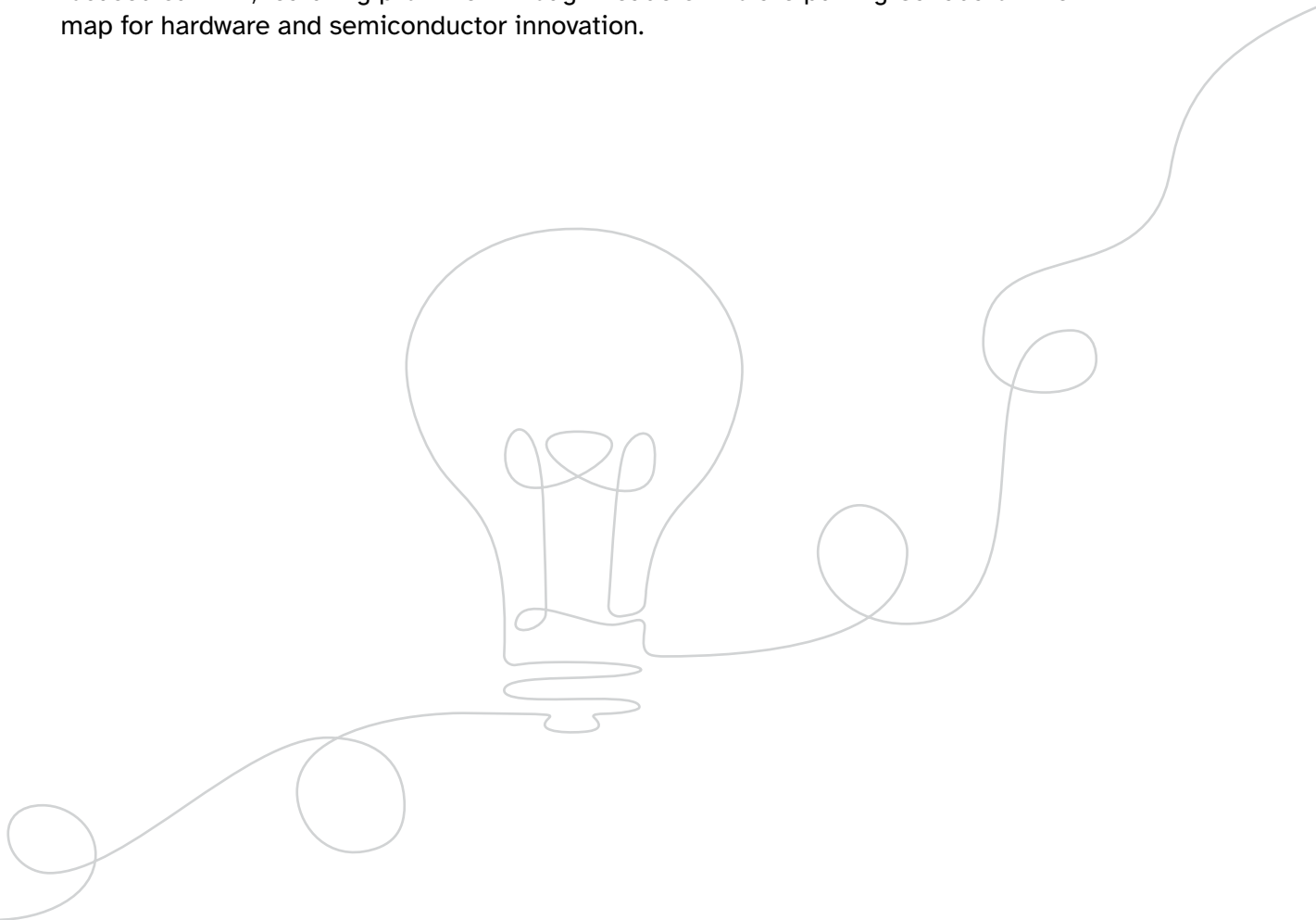


**Advocate for investments in broadband connectivity in Markham's business parks**

- Advocate with telecommunication companies and other levels of government to ensure Markham businesses have broadband connectivity in their business parks.

**2.3****Support business networking and community building****Deliver, sponsor and promote business events**

- Deliver, sponsor and promote business events focused on promoting community building, information sharing and training in the Markham business community.
- Events could be delivered through existing and new partnerships, such as the Markham Board of Trade and other business associations, as well as through the City's economic development team.
- Ensure that Markham's racialized organizations are aware of various business events taking place in the city – ensuring there are opportunities for businesses, suppliers, entrepreneurs, and support agencies to connect.
- Support ventureLAB's HardTech Summit, as Canada's premier hardware technology-focused summit, featuring prominent thought leaders who are putting Canada on the map for hardware and semiconductor innovation.





# Goal #3: Enhance the entrepreneurship, innovation and commercialization ecosystem

## 3.1

### Work with local and regional bodies to enable innovation and entrepreneurship in Markham

#### Position a Markham Innovation Council to foster innovation and entrepreneurship

- Establish an Innovation Council focused on identifying and delivering collaborations focused on supporting entrepreneurs and promoting Markham's innovation community.
- The Council should engage key local innovation community leaders, post-secondary partners and technology workers.



#### Strengthen Markham's entrepreneurship eco-system with investments in accelerator and incubator programming that complement target sectors

- Working with Markham's three incubators, ventureLAB, YSpace and Seneca HELIX, develop and support programming that complement's Markham's target economic sectors in semiconductors, hardware, automotive, creative industries and technology.
- Where required, work with new business incubator and accelerator programs to support Markham's target economic sectors.



#### Establish Markham as the nucleus for hardware and semiconductor scale-up innovation and start-ups

- Leveraging ventureLAB's position as Canada's only hardware focused incubator and accelerator, continue to invest and build Markham as Canada's nucleus for hardware and semiconductor innovation related start-ups.



#### Deliver open innovation challenges focused on solving civic and private sector challenges with a focus on encouraging new businesses and products

- Working with partners, develop and deliver open innovation challenges that can encourage new business formation and new product development.
- A focus on civic challenges can be used to solve local problems, while solving business challenges can be used to build corporate partnerships and new business opportunities.



### Develop an innovation eco-system map to assist entrepreneurs in connecting with the right resources

- Work with partners in the innovation eco-system to map resources and supports to assist entrepreneurs in accessing the resources they need at the right time.
- Widely promote the ecosystem map to different audiences – partner organizations, established businesses, racialized organizations, immigrant settlement organizations, residents in Markham via City’s social media channels, etc.



### Build collaborations with local, regional and international incubators and accelerators

- To promote collaboration within the innovation eco-system, while developing growth pathways for Markham start-ups and attracting start-ups to Markham, the City should develop collaborations with local, regional and international incubators and accelerators.



### Support the growth of the “Hardware Angel Network” to support hardware companies in Markham

- Hardware Angel Network (HAN), the only hardware and deep-tech focused investor network supporting pre-seed and seed stage start-ups in the country - its presence will help attract hardware and semiconductor companies to Markham.



## 3.2

### Realize Markham Centre’s potential as a creative innovation district

#### Advocate and support bringing together a critical mass of creators, entrepreneurs, businesses, residents and activities to Markham Centre

- Building a critical mass of activities is central to ensuring Markham Centre realizes its potential as an innovation district.



#### Support the ongoing growth and expansion of York University in Markham Centre

- Continue to facilitate and support the growth and expansion of York University in Markham Centre.



#### Support the relocation of ventureLAB to Markham Centre

- Work with ventureLAB and its partners to relocate its offices and hardware lab to Markham Centre.



### Support the growth of YSpace within Markham Centre

- Continue to support YSpace and its growth within Markham Centre.



### Establish a creative incubator space in Markham Centre to support arts and culture entrepreneurs

- Work with YSpace, York University and Markham Public Library on creating an arts focused incubator and shared studio facility.
- This space could be integrated into the future library, recreation and performing arts centre that is envisioned for Markham Centre.



### Establish Markham Centre as a living-lab technology demonstration zone

- As Markham's new urban downtown, Markham Centre provides an opportunity to implement and demonstrate automotive, mobility, sustainability and property technology solutions that can improve the quality of life of residents.
- Working with its partners in the innovation eco-system, Markham should establish Markham Centre as a living-lab technology demonstration zone as a way to attract investment and support entrepreneurs in taking products to market.
- This living-lab should provide wrap around incubator and business support programming to assist participating companies in building their ventures in Markham.



### Develop a pipeline of office demand by working with local incubator and accelerator programs in Markham Centre

- Develop relationships with Remington and the local development community to support office pipeline to connect start-ups to office space locally, potentially at discounted rates.



### Develop and launch a targeted marketing effort focused on attracting, connecting and growing diverse and synergistic creative industry and technology companies

- Develop and deliver a marketing plan focused on attracting creative industry and technology companies to add to the diversity and critical mass of Markham Centre as an innovation zone.
- Working closely with YSpace and York University's AMPD to leverage their expertise to develop an innovation hub focused on the creative industries.



### Develop an accelerator program focused on street level retail in Markham Centre

- To support Markham Centre as a destination, work with YSpace and Remington to launch a retail accelerator program focused on attracting unique and diverse businesses within Markham Centre.



### Support and invest in events and activities that draw people and innovators to Markham Centre

- Through the City's Events Team and Destination Markham Team, focus on supporting, investing in, and encouraging events and activities to locate in Markham Centre in order to add to the density and diversity of activities in the area.
- Explore the opportunity to develop and deploy tech and innovation related events and programming in Markham Centre.



### Establish a cultural and visitor hub in Markham Centre

- Create a cultural and visitor hub operated by Destination Markham in Markham Centre to help promote visitor attraction in Markham.



### Investigate development of a multi-use event facility in Markham Centre

- Undertake a needs assessment and feasibility study for the establishment of a multi-use event facility in Markham Centre that could include a new performing arts centre, library and recreation centre.
- The multi-use events facility would help bring additional people to Markham Centre and add to the density and diversity of activities taking place within the community.



## 3.3

### Establish the Markham Innovation Exchange (MiX) as Canada's premier destination for hardware manufacturing

#### Develop and launch a targeted marketing effort focused on attracting, connecting and growing diverse and synergistic hardware and technology companies

- Develop a marketing and government relations plan that is focused on attracting hardware focused manufacturing and technologies, specifically in the semiconductor, automotive, energy and sustainability sectors.
- Additional supportive uses and those that are synergistic from a sustainability and supply chain perspective should also be considered, such as ventures that can leverage by-products of production.
- Creative industries should also be considered for the MiX to add to the diversity and increase potential for creative collaborations between ventures.





### Invest in and expedite servicing for the MiX

- Given the demand for employment lands, the City should invest in and expedite servicing for Phase #1 of the MiX in order to accelerate development and curate users to maximize economic and sustainability benefits.
- The City has made significant investments on the MiX, owning more than 400 acres of developable land. By working with landowners and other levels of government, advancing servicing can unlock the value of the City's lands and attract end users.



### Complete secondary plan to ensure end users align with the vision of the MiX

- While there is already a secondary plan in place for Phase #1 lands of the MiX adjacent to Highway 404, a new planning framework should be completed for all of the MiX lands to ensure end-uses align with the City's vision for the area.
- The secondary plan should consider sustainability elements, including materials exchange between companies, low-impact development, green buildings, incorporation of natural areas, incorporation of renewable and district energy solutions, and the efficient use of land resources.



### Establish the MiX on a foundation of sustainability

- The large target tenants of the MiX have a focus on ESG principles. To ensure the MiX is attractive to these tenants, it should be built on a foundation of sustainability and a net climate positive impact.
- Staff should focus on attracting tenants that have complementary uses and facilitating material synergies, such as taking advantage of one tenant's waste heat to support space heating for another tenant.



### Work to attract an anchor innovation space to support collaboration and business support in the MiX

- To support collaboration and start-up business formation in the MiX, there will be a need to establish an anchor innovation space.
- The City should explore future potential partnerships that can support the activation of collaboration and innovation within the MiX.
- A potential innovation space could be established with an existing partner, such as ventureLAB.



# Goal #4: Galvanize a creative ecosystem

## 4.1

### Increase visibility and density of arts and culture in Markham

#### Raise the profile of public art

- Continue to commission new public art by professional local artists through the Public Art Program when possible/appropriate.
- Ensure the execution of the Public Art Policy of 1% of the budget of new developments (both municipal capital project and private developments) going toward public art. Ensure an annual budget is allocated for equity in public art investment across the city.



#### Develop opportunities for more local art and contemporary history at City facilities

- Clearly communicate the opportunities for local artists at the Varley (e.g., “Right here right now” program).
- Allocate funding to present more works by local Markham professional artists – continue to show one regional artist per year (at minimum).
- Expand the Collections Strategy at the Markham Museum to prioritize more diversified holdings to reflect the past as well as the changing nature of the community. Prioritize de-colonial approaches and social equity in the development of collections, exhibitions and programming. Allocate additional resources for research and a museum acquisitions program.
- Increase acquisition and commissioning of works by professional local artists by the Varley/City when possible/appropriate.



#### Identify opportunities for co-location for artists/arts space in commercial or City-run facilities.

- Prioritize mixed-use/co-location opportunities that are geographically close to existing arts and culture facilities.
- Examples could include the Unionville Train Station, Stiver Mill, or Markham Museum.



### Compile a full list of performing arts facilities and specifications

- Catalogue Markham facilities that present or provide space to performing artists. Assess facility needs based on gaps in this list to determine what types of spaces are needed in the city. Advocate for funding accordingly.
- The inventory should also consider private spaces to assess competition and gaps, such as churches, cultural centres, the fairgrounds, schools and seniors' facilities.



## 4.2

### Develop supports and infrastructure to attract investments in film production

#### Develop and launch a marketing plan focused on attracting film productions

- Develop a formalized marketing portal and support process focused on attracting film and media productions to Markham.



#### Promote and support the attraction of film studio investments

- Building on the Greater Toronto Area's density of film production, promote and support the attraction of film studio investments to Markham.



## 4.3

### Build a sense of community and joint mission in Markham's arts and culture sector

#### Advocate for City Council to formally recognize arts and culture as a priority

- "Supporting arts, culture, recreation and sport" is an objective found in Markham's 2020-2023 strategic plan, but adequate support and leadership from Council specifically for the arts is important to ensure the necessary activities are properly supported.



#### Develop an artist advisory group to grow long-term relationships with local artists and arts programming partners

- Develop an advisory group focused on bringing together artists and arts organizations to share programming, insights and foster collaborations. May take the form of an annual symposium.



### Facilitate a peer-to-peer program and artist mentorship program

- To support connecting and building the arts community, develop a peer-to-peer program focused on mentorship and information sharing to support artist development.



### Support and deliver artist focused networking events

- Deliver and provide support for networking events focused on bringing the arts community together to collaborate and share learning.



## 4.4

### Grow awareness of Markham's arts and culture through improved marketing and collaboration

#### Develop an arts and culture brand for Markham

- Ensure all City arts and culture programming is branded as such and seek opportunities for promotion at city events (e.g., festivals).



#### Develop an integrated marketing strategy that focuses on promoting collaboratively Markham's cultural facilities and community events

- An analysis of user data for Markham's cultural facilities shows that while each venue has an audience, those audiences often do not cross-pollinate.
- Given the potential to leverage this existing audience across facilities and programming, building an integrated marketing strategy to share and build these audiences provides growth potential for all of the City's facilities and events.



#### Develop marketing tactics targeted specifically at "opportunity groups" for each of the three city-run arts facilities

- Environics Analytics data should be continually used to inform action for marketing of arts and culture in Markham.



#### Build a dedicated e-newsletter to promote all arts and culture activities in Markham

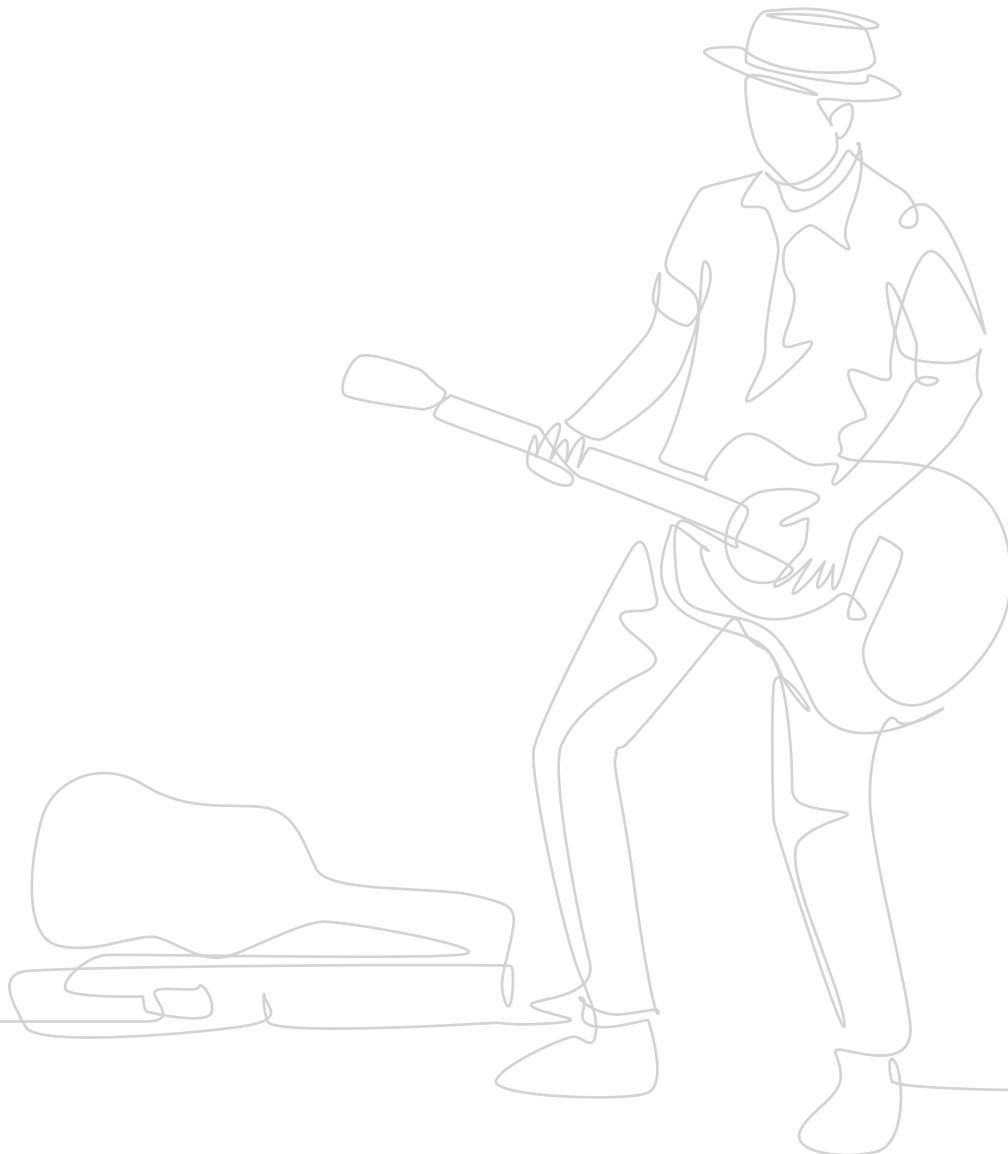
- Develop a dedicated Markham led Arts and Culture newsletter that promotes City-led and community-led initiatives.
- Regularly push out this content online to promote arts and culture across the city (deploy on City social, collaborate with local media).





### Develop a central arts and culture promotion, directory and communications hub

- Develop a dedicated website that highlights arts and culture activities and resources in Markham. The website would include:
  - Events and Programs
  - Artist Profiles
  - Resources for arts, such as studio spaces, how-to-guides, etc.
  - Interactive Maps that feature public art, exhibitions, studio space, etc.
  - This could live on Destination Markham’s website, Markham’s business website, or potentially with a partner, like Markham Arts Council.



## 4.5

## Renew and reinvigorate Markham Museum's role and reimagine it as a community and cultural destination

### Review the Markham Museum's mandate

- Ensure the Markham Museum's mandate reflects the diversity of the community, while leveraging science, industry, history, the environment and the arts, to understand how Markham evolved and what its future could be.



### Develop a dedicated website to support promoting the Markham Museum

- In order to improve the marketing of the Markham Museum, develop and launch a dedicated website outside of the City's website.



### Continue developing core programming and education areas

- The Museum should continue to focus on the four-core program areas, specifically:
  - Material Cultural Technologies
  - Agriculture and Food
  - Engineering Technologies
  - Environmental Technologies
- These four technology areas reflect the existing collection, exhibitions and programs.



### Invest in the stewardship of the Museum's collection

- Continue with the systematic Collections Review initiated in 2017.
- Incorporate decolonization practices and social equity in the strategic development and documentation of the collection as well as the curatorial research program. The purpose of the program is to identify and document traditionally under-represented communities, including women, Indigenous, Metis and Inuit, persons with disabilities (physical and cognitive) and the many global diaspora that have chosen to make Markham a home, including persons from Africa, Asia and South America.
- Adopt a more targeted approach to identifying collections of significance that reflect the nature and the history of the community.
- Allocate adequate resources for care of current collections and to permit strategic growth.
- Align the collection and research program with corporate plans for a City Archives program and the virtual Markham Sport Hall of Fame.



### Develop and implement a Museum Site Master Plan

- A site Master Plan should be undertaken to review the importance and/or relevance of all existing structure on site. While also providing guidance for the repurposing of buildings/space, the creation of additional/expanded collections/exhibition storage and purpose-built flexible programming spaces. As an integral part of the Site Master Plan, the Museum should also undertake a site Interpretive Plan that would provide orientation and examine the various buildings and structure on the site from the visitor experience perspective.



### Establish a long-term exhibition plan that supports the Museum's growth and engagement with the community

- A 3-to-7-year exhibition plan should be developed, including associated programming that includes active partnership with the community and cultural groups. This plan should include a review of all permanent exhibitions on site and focus on redevelopment. Partnerships and sponsors should be included in the plan.



### Place a greater focus on rentals and partnered events/programs

- Actively promote the use of the Museums buildings and grounds for rentals and partnered events/programs. Research areas of growth and best practices. Develop rental packages, preferred partners, streamline processes and create efficiencies. While continuing to develop, design and present signature Museum events.



### Explore additional avenues for revenue generation

- Research and expand on traditional museum revenue sources, such as the Museum shop and grants/partnership funding, and trial new revenue sources and partnership models that have proven successful in other institutions/attractions.



### Design and implement new visitor experiences

- Explore more ways to activate the entire site to create new and unique visitor experiences.
- Leverage the use of technology to engage visitors in self-guided exploration and activities.
- Build off the success and lessons learned in the development of the pottery studio programming to launch other studio spaces on site.



### Develop a plan for specialized knowledge preservation and succession planning

- The Museum must develop a plan to preserve specialized knowledge of site operations to ensure current programmed events and site operations can continue (e.g., Applefest operation of the Cider Mill).
- All current full-time staff have been with the Museum for 8+ years and hold an irreplaceable and integrated depth of knowledge of the Museum and the community.



## 4.6

## Grow and expand live theatre opportunities in Markham

**Update and align the Flato Markham Theatre's mandate**

- Ensure the Flato Markham Theatre's mandate reflects the diversity of the community and promotes a vibrant creative community through live arts.

**Expand theatre programming to meet demand in the community**

- Expand programming to create opportunities for every child in Markham to be exposed to live arts, including the expansion of camp programs and community series beyond Flato Markham Theatre.
- This should include exploring the use of other community theatre facilities, such as Cornell.
- Develop 5-year plan to expand the Theatre's Discovery Programs.

**Prepare business case and plan to build a new theatre complex to meet future destination opportunities**

- Develop a needs assessment and business case to develop a new theatre complex as part of the planned Civic Square in Markham Centre.
- The planned theatre complex should aim to be a regional attraction, while also providing expanded programming for Markham and neighbouring community residents.

**Develop partnerships with York University to expand learning and presentation opportunities**

- Work with York University's Theatre Faculty to collaborate on learning opportunities, as well as to deliver productions that share student stories.

**Evaluate space needs of the Flato Markham Theatre to meet future opportunities**

- Undertake a space assessment of the theatre to determine future needs and potential re-design and updating of the theatre to meet future opportunities. This could include:
  - A second smaller theatre space for smaller productions and camps.
  - Updating and redesign of lobby space to create more programming space.
  - Creating additional storage and production space.
- This assessment would need to follow plans for a new theatre complex and how Flato Markham Theatre fits into the future of live performance in the community.





## 4.7

## Maximize the Varley Art Gallery's capacity as an arts hub

**Review and update the Varley Art Gallery's mandate**

- Ensure the Varley's mandate reflects the diversity of the community, promotes local artists and sets a course for maximizing its role as a community arts hub.

**Develop a dedicated website to support promoting the Varley Art Gallery**

- In order to improve the marketing of the Varley Art Gallery, develop and launch a dedicated website outside of the City's website.

**Continue developing core programming and education areas**

- The Varley should continue to develop and deliver its core programming and education initiatives to support artist development and engagement in Markham.

**Restart gallery programming that was paused during the pandemic**

- Restart the CAIR (Community Artist in Residence) program to ensure outreach to local audiences.
- Restart the NEXT WAVE exhibition program with York University graduate students to promote greater collaboration and community awareness.

**Continue to build joint exhibition collaborations**

- The Varley has been successful in building joint exhibitions. It should continue collaborations with appropriate regional galleries in the development, presentation and promotion of joint exhibitions and related catalogues.

**Develop a sustainable plan for animation of the Varley courtyard**

- The Varley courtyard plays an important role in the community and could be utilized to draw more visitors to the gallery and animate Main Street Unionville.

**Implement facility improvements that increase programming capacity and accessibility**

- Identify and implement facility improvements that increase programming potential and accessibility, such as updating rental facilities, implementing AODA needs and enhancing security for clients.



# Goal #5: Invest in our people and places

## 5.1

### Support community-based business formation and healthy commercial centres

#### Support the establishment and growth of traditional small businesses

- Provide one-on-one consultation support for traditional small businesses across Markham.
- Leverage the Markham Public Library and other community spaces as a way to bring support directly to communities, engaging entrepreneurs in their neighbourhoods.
- Deliver a range of training and networking events to support traditional small businesses.



#### Use data to support small business formation and expansion

- Provide detailed trade area market research data to new and existing businesses in Markham's commercial districts in order to support their growth and success.



#### Promote neighbourhood success through local ownership and a healthy mix of retail

- Launch a program focused on identifying retail and service gaps in Markham's neighbourhoods and then provide active engagement to support local residents in addressing those gaps through business formation.
- The program should focus on sharing detailed trade area market research data, leverage Provincial grant programs (Summer Company and Starter Company), as well as YSpace.
- There should be a strong focus on ensuring underrepresented groups, including youth, women, Indigenous peoples and racialized communities, are empowered to start businesses through this programming.



#### Provide digital adoption support to traditional small businesses

- Leverage the Digital Main Street program to provide digital adoption support to traditional small businesses across Markham.



## 5.2

## Support the retail health and destination draw of Main Street Unionville

**Support the retail and service health of Main Street Unionville**

- Undertake an analysis of Main Street Unionville's trade area to identify missing business opportunities, while supporting local residents to start businesses to meet that demand.
- Aim to focus Summer Company and Starter Company grants for one year specifically on Main Street Unionville to maximize impact.
- Explore the feasibility of attracting a hotel to Main Street Unionville.

**Assist Unionville BIA in promoting shopping local and drawing people to Main Street Unionville during the planned street reconstruction**

- During the planned reconstruction of Main Street Unionville, due to take place between 2024 and 2026, focus on providing marketing and business support to the Unionville BIA.

**Continue to integrate the Varley Art Gallery and McKay Art Gallery into community activations along Main Street Unionville**

- The Varley Art Gallery and McKay Art Gallery are both important elements within Unionville, with both facilities and their exhibitions attracting visitor and complementing community events.
- This integration should continue and be expanded by encouraging greater animation of both spaces to add to the street life.

**Complete the installation of the Unionville Public Art project**

- Coinciding with the planned reconstruction of Main Street Unionville, the implementation of the Unionville Public Art installation should be completed.

**Promote Main Street Unionville as a destination for public and private events**

- Continue to promote Main Street Unionville as a destination for public events such as the TD Markham Jazz Festival, Thursday Nights at the Bandstand, and Unionville Festival.
- In addition, developing a marketing plan focused on attracting private events using both public (Varley Art Gallery, Stiver Mill, etc.) and private facilities for events should be undertaken.
- Explore sharing of resources between both BIA's during critical events.



### Promote film production opportunities using Main Street Unionville

- As part of efforts to promote film production in Markham, and given the area's ongoing use for film production, continue to promote Main Street Unionville as a desirable filming location.



### Integrate community assets into the programming of Unionville, specifically Stiver Mill, Unionville Train Station, and Crosby Arena

- The integration of community assets such as the Stiver Mill, Unionville Train Station, and Crosby Arena should be considered to add further activities in Unionville.



## 5.3

### Support the retail health and destination draw of Main Street Markham

#### Support the retail and service health of Main Street Markham

- Undertake an analysis of Main Street Markham's trade area to identify missing business opportunities, while supporting local residents to start businesses to meet that demand.
- Aim to focus Summer Company and Starter Company grants for one year specifically on Main Street Markham to maximize impact.
- Explore the feasibility of attracting a hotel to Main Street Markham.



#### Explore ways to integrate the Markham Museum into events along Main Street Markham

- The Markham Museum's location at the northern end of Main Street Markham provides an opportunity to better integrate and leverage the facility with events along Main Street.
- Specifically, as the Markham Museum grows its events, aim to work with Markham Village BIA to promote activities that encourage pedestrian traffic in the area.



#### Promote Main Street Markham as a destination for public and private events

- Continue to promote Markham Main Street as a destination for public events, such as the Markham Village Music Festival and Santa Claus Parade.
- Explore sharing of resources between both BIA's during critical events.





## 5.4

## Support the Yonge Street commercial corridor in Thornhill

**Support the retail and service health of Yonge Street Corridor**

- Undertake an analysis of the Yonge Street commercial corridor trade area to identify missing business opportunities, while supporting local residents to start businesses to meet that demand.
- Aim to focus Summer Company and Starter Company grants for one year specifically on the Yonge Street corridor to maximize impact.

**Advocate with Metrolinx to provide business support to those affected by the Yonge Street North Subway Extension**

- To support businesses affected by the Yonge Street North Subway Extension, advocate with Metrolinx to provide funding to deliver business support programming.
- During the planned subway extension, focus on providing marketing and business support to the business along the Yonge Street corridor.

**Work with the City of Vaughan to establish an inter-municipal business improvement area**

- To promote local economic development and support local businesses along the Yonge Street North Subway Extension, staff will work with the City of Vaughan to establish support organizations and programs that are complimentary to existing Small Business Enterprise Centre and Economic Development initiatives. This can include, for example, the establishment of a Yonge-North BIA.



## 5.5

## Promote and support entrepreneurs who are representative of Markham's diversity

**Support the health and success of Markham's unique cultural retail experiences**

- Markham provides diverse and culturally reflective shopping experiences, such as First Markham Place and Pacific Mall, which should be promoted as tourism destination opportunities.
- To ensure the success of these businesses, business support should be provided to these entrepreneurs through targeted outreach with the Markham Small Business Centre.



### Promote Markham's culinary diversity through tourism marketing

- Markham's offering of international culinary diversity provides a great way to promote and grow local restaurants through tourism.
- Working with Destination Markham, the City should leverage this unique asset to attract new visitors that spend money at Markham businesses.



### Develop a social procurement framework to support government and B2B purchases from equity-deserving local business owners

- Develop a municipal social procurement framework focused on hiring people from underemployed groups and employment-focused social enterprises.
- This should extend Markham's purchasing framework to leverage municipal purchases to improve economic, social, or environmental wellbeing, improve access for micro, small businesses and/or social enterprises and promote innovation.



## 5.6

### Collaborate on programming and delivery across City cultural facilities with a focus on reflecting Markham's cultural diversity

#### Undertake one collaborative project around a coordinated theme annually

- Develop one collaborative project on a regular basis that touches on all three City cultural venues that can be coordinated to create greater awareness and impact. For example:
  - A collaborative project could be developed around a topic e.g., music – say, live music scheduled by Flato, with pop-up performances across all three venues, work from the Varley collection on display, Markham Museum ties in a local music history element.
  - A collaborative project could be developed in partnership with a community group to highlight the diverse Markham community.



#### Identify opportunities to collaborate on program delivery

- Assess City-run arts and culture-related programming across all departments (e.g., work with Recreation to align/co-produce art classes).
- There is similar programming (e.g., art classes, theatre camps) being offered by Recreation as well as at the Varley or Flato. There is an opportunity for coordination across departments and to promote the three city facilities through these efforts.
- Such alignment could increase resources available and thus spaces for participants to join City programming. Such alignment also opens more cross-promotional opportunities (e.g., promote the Varley at Recreation's art classes).
- Develop pathways for skill development starting at a Recreation based level on to more professional/enhanced opportunities with subject experts at the Culture venues.



### Develop one program annually that represents Markham's cultural diversity at each of the three city-run cultural facilities

- The co-produced programming and exhibitions discussed in above, along with the sharing of authority with community partners, could also be an opportunity to feature diverse art forms/stories about specific communities and their stories (different cultural backgrounds, LGBT+ community and disability community).
- Profiling diversity in the community can help to build connections between the facilities and various groups and open the spaces to new and broader audiences. It also helps create inclusive spaces for all in the community and a sense of belonging.



### Partner with community associations to build relationships and showcase diverse stories

- Identify and feature stories about local artists from various communities or how arts and culture contribute to community life.
- Commission local artists from these communities to produce works (e.g., film, podcast, visual art, performances) that tell the stories of these communities.
- While people are aware of the diversity of Markham, often these stories or community experiences are siloed or not shared across the city. Marketing can be a great way to highlight and share these stories.



### Streamline the arts and culture volunteer recruitment, onboarding and retention process

- Continue to leverage a single database of previous arts and culture volunteers but work to improve recruitment and retention for cultural facilities.
- Work with City volunteer staff to develop arts and culture specific on-boarding/ training and application protocols for volunteers.



### Develop a sponsorship strategy that encompasses all three cultural venues

- Given the shared interest of corporate sponsors in cultural events there is potential to increase and maximize sponsorship by developing a shared sponsorship strategy for all three cultural facilities and City-led events.



## 5.7

## Support community arts and culture programming that contribute to Markham's quality of life and celebrate its diversity

### Create a cultural festivals and events working group with the express aim to encourage cross-festival programming to increase attendance from residents of all backgrounds

- Develop a festivals events working group to support program development, share learnings and work together to grow audiences.



### Expand and grow funding opportunities for Markham Festivals and Cultural events

- The Celebrate Markham Grant program provides funding for community festivals and events. Available funding for the program is continuously over-subscribed and has not increased since its inception. Specifically, an increase in funding should be realized for the following:
  - Major Community Festivals – given the tourism draw of some festivals, such as Taste of Asia, Markham Village Music Festival, Unionville Festival and TD Markham Jazz Festival, increasing the funding for these events can have a greater economic impact.
  - Cultural Events and Programs – to support and reflect the diversity of Markham, increasing the funding available for cultural programming should be a priority.



### Set targets and develop program criteria around funding allocations and programming for equity-deserving

- Align funding with Markham's Diversity Action Plan to ensure cultural events and programs align with the diversity of the community.
- There should be a strong focus on equity-deserving groups (e.g., BIPOC organizations) to support equitable growth and support.



### Increase resources for City-delivered events in order to support growth

- The number of City delivered community events has grown since the inception of the funding model from Celebrate Markham, as has the size and scale of some of those events.
- To support the continued growth of those events, such as Canada Day and the Children's Festival, as well as permit new events, such as Open Street and Civic Centre activations, growth in the available budget and staffing complement is required.



### Streamline site information for events and festivals

- Develop a clear list of available community and private assets suitable for events and festivals in Markham, including their capacity, features, whether they are barrier free, and availability for different types of events.
- This list should be publicly available to support booking for new and existing community events and festivals.
- Festival locations should consider proximity to nearby amenities – such as transit, accommodations and businesses to maximize spill-over economic impacts.



### Facilitate strong support systems to help festival and events' organizers more effectively plan, organize and execute their events, and to support the ongoing growth and success of festivals

- Provide hands-on support for community events and festival organizers through the City's Special Events team.
- This will continue to build on the City's existing support for festivals and events.



### Develop a Markham Special Events Policy and By-Law that provides clear processes and direction for event organizers

- To provide certainty and clear support for festival organizers and events develop a Markham Special Events Policy and By-Law that provides clear direction on facility booking, types of events facilities can support, and the requirements for each type of event and facility.



## 5.8

### Support access to the required workforce by facilitating connections between academia and industry

#### Strengthen working relationship with the Workforce Planning Board of York Region (WPBYR)

- Leverage WPBYR's annual Local Labour Plan to ensure a better understanding of local and regional labour market issues. Promote WPBYR occupational and career promotion materials, the Experiential Learning Hub, Career Pathway Passport and digital toolkits among the local business community, labour force, business associations, industry partners, post-secondary institutions and local school districts.



#### Leverage and continue to build on talent attraction and retention tools

- Utilize York Link platform to promote local employment and career opportunities including York Link's Workforce Development Tools and the York Region Job Board.



#### Facilitate engagement between businesses and post-secondary institutions focused on ensuring an understanding of labour force needs

- Work with Markham's post-secondary partners at York University and Seneca Polytechnic to engage business leaders in sharing their labour force needs.





## 5.9

## Connect and grow the creative workforce

**Develop an intentionally cross-sectoral art/culture/creative “in residence” program for the City**

- This person could be an artist, historian, performer, or work in another creative industry such as design, film, or gaming. Such a residency would bring this person into the City and provide them the opportunity to work across all three facilities.

**Develop a formal internship program with York University Markham Campus and the three city-run culture facilities**

- A critical component of growing a strong local workforce is building networks and highlighting career paths. With the new Markham Campus of York University, there is an opportunity to get in at the ground level, to build relationships that will ideally result in opportunities for students see a career path locally once their degree is completed.

**Develop an “arts education” working group**

- Encourage the integration of local artists into local post-secondary educational programs (e.g., bring in artists as speakers, mentors, etc.). Such a group should develop ways to promote arts-related training programs by going into high schools or having high school visits to the campus, to encourage the next generation of arts professionals in Markham (e.g., an arts career fair).

**Contribute to the professional development of the Culture sector**

- All three venues, the museum, gallery and theatre, will continue to play a vital role in the culture sector by continuing to inform professional practice including working with education institutions, professional associations, supporting internships and other education work experiences.



## 5.10

## Advocate for investments that promote housing and transportation options

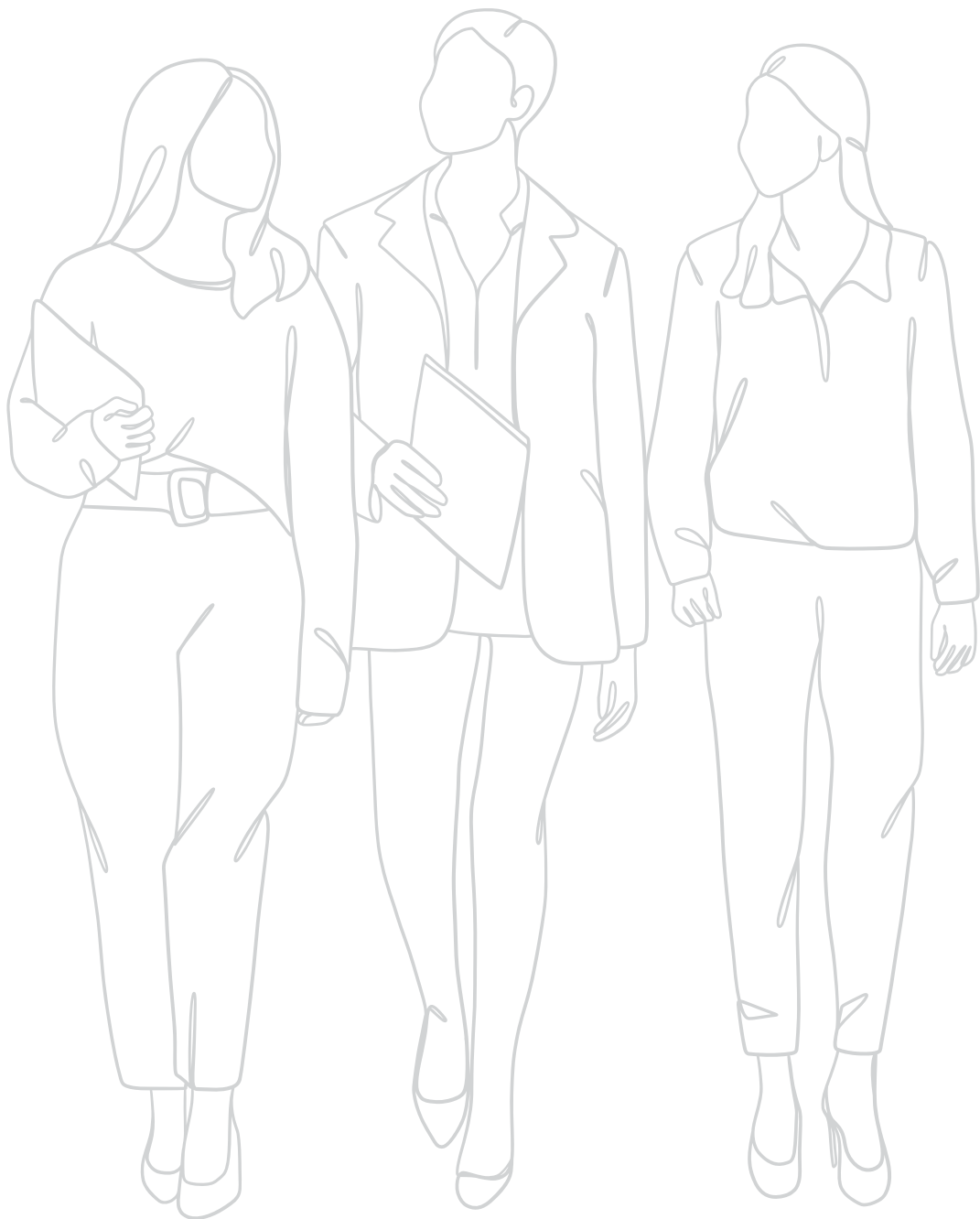
**Advocate for investments in housing and affordable supply**

- Highlight the challenges employers are facing in attracting and retaining both skilled and unskilled talent due to a lack of housing affordability and options.

**Advocate for transit connectivity options**

- Continue to advocate for all-day GO services between Markham and Toronto along the Stouffville Line in order to support business, workforce and visitor transportation needs.
- Support employers in their advocacy for increased transit connectivity, including first and last mile solutions.







Courtyard of Varley Art Gallery featuring the “2023 Lunar Lanterns of Indigenous Lights”



# How We Ensure Success: Implementing the Strategy

Failures or delays in implementation of an economic development and culture strategy often results from a lack of financial resources or limited staff capacity to lead initiatives. The level of investment, effort and coordination required to successfully implement the 2023 to 2027 Markham Economic Development and Culture Strategy will be significant.

Successful implementation requires a commitment from the Markham Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship Department that is coordinated with other City departments and external agencies.

It will also require staffing and capacity, partnerships, and additional budget. Consideration must be given to the appropriate service delivery model through which business and community stakeholders, civic leaders and elected officials can regularly come together to make informed and strategic contributions to economic development and culture growth.

## Role of Markham's Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship Department

Implementing the recommendations and actions contained in this strategy requires a coordinated and collaborative approach, one that brings together internal and external stakeholders and advances a shared vision of economic and culture growth.



To lead and support this coordinated response, the Markham Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship Department is well positioned to create appropriate opportunities to enable knowledge exchange, establish consensus around objectives and common goals, make implementation decisions and determine performance measures.

Depending on the needs of each strategic objective, the roles of Markham's Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship Department might include:

- **Leader** – drive strategy implementation through collaborative partnerships, supporters and champions.
- **Catalyst** – envision, implement and support new and/or expanded programming or services.
- **Facilitator** – bring together partners to explore challenges and opportunities, promoting group consensus and alignment, resolution and a path forward. Leverage existing networks and connecting and directing partners to resources and capacity building.
- **Advocate** – be the lead and support voice to influence decisions within political, economic and social arenas.

Successful implementation requires that:

- Funding is available to implement strategic initiatives outlined in the strategy. Funding sources may include public, private and not-for-profit financial and in-kind contributions.
- Markham's Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship Department be the coordinating or "backbone" organization to lead the way.
- Working partnerships are created to support and advance implementation of the strategy.
- There is a shared commitment and buy-in among partners and stakeholders including businesses, industry partners, education and training institutions, workforce partners, and municipal, provincial and federal government.
- The vision and value drivers for collaboration are articulated to all City partners and stakeholders.
- Knowledge sharing and ongoing communication is ensured.
- Performance measures track strategy implementation, outcomes and impact.

Successful implementation of the 2023 to 2027 Economic Development and Culture Strategy requires the following recommendations be implemented. The recommendations related to increasing staff capacity and technology-enabled tools include:

- Resource and develop a staff structure focused on the delivery of strategy.
- Invest in technology to support growth of City-owned cultural facilities.
- Develop online resources and tools that promote Markham's economic opportunities and quality of life.



## **Recommendation #1: Resource and develop a staff structure focused on the delivery of strategy**

### **1. Create a new dedicated arts and culture position**

Hire a Senior Manager staff position member to provide overarching direction and coordination across the three City's cultural facilities and events team, as well as liaise with the arts and culture sector in the city more broadly.

### **2. Create a cross-departmental marketing service that includes additional staff resources**

While Corporate Communications provide marketing support, there are certain functions delivered at the team level within the department, such as social media, e-newsletters, website management and, in the case of the theatre, performance marketing.

To better coordinate and maximize potential, develop a shared marketing service model with dedicated staff, for both economic development and culture teams. This would include combining existing marketing staff from the Flato Markham Theatre and Varley Art Gallery, with a new FTE dedicated marketing resource to support the entire Department.

### **3. Establish a shared technology resource for cultural facilities**

As the City's cultural facilities adopt new technologies and analytics tools that improve marketing and the visitor experience, develop a shared technology resource across all three facilities.

### **4. Support expansion of cultural programming with additional staff investments**

To support the growth of programming at the City's three cultural facilities additional staffing is required.

### **5. Support the growth of community and city-led events with additional staff resource**

In order to grow the number of city-led events and community events to be supported, hire an additional Event Coordinator to support the Events Team. This resource would deliver new City-led events, while also supporting existing events, including those at the Markham Museum, Flato Markham Theatre and Varley Art Gallery.

### **6. Hire dedicated staff liaison to support investment inquires and implement foreign direct investment initiatives**

A dedicated staff person responsible for strengthening relationships with government and business associations, promotion and outreach to targeted businesses and FDI markets, while providing customer service and event/mission planning. This staff person will work in collaboration with Toronto Global and York Region's initiatives to maximize benefits for Markham.

### **7. Hire dedicated staff as the single point of contact and coordination for BR&E initiatives**

A single point of contact will ensure continued focus on developing long-term relationships between business owners and the business visitation teams. Developing this system will reduce redundancies and allow for increased specialization in targeted sectors.

### **8. Formalize economic development coordinator position**

A single point of contact will ensure continued focus on developing long-term relationships between business owners and the business visitation teams. Developing this system will reduce redundancies and allow for increased specialization in targeted sectors.

### **9. Conduct ongoing review of staffing model in relation to overall strategy implementation to ensure required resourcing is achieved to meet objectives**

In order to meet realize the objectives of this strategy, Department leadership should continuously review staff resource requirements to successful implement the actions identified. This is to recognize that successful implementation will require additional staff resources to be successful.

## **Recommendation #2: Develop online resources and tools that promote Markham's economic opportunities and quality of life**

### **10. Utilize Markham's existing CRM system to track sector-specific business engagement activities and leads for Markham's target sectors**

The Economic Development team's CRM should be leveraged to track and extract insights on Markham's business community.

### **11. Develop an interactive map tool to promote Markham business data [markhambusiness.ca](http://markhambusiness.ca)**

Develop an interactive map-based data platform that brings together a business directory, available employment lands and real estate, land use information, development applications, municipal infrastructure projects, as well as economic development and cultural data, that will provide an opportunity for businesses to better access information and data, while encouraging collaboration and business development.

### **12. Markham business directory and annual survey**

To augment the York Region Employment Survey and increase responses, Markham should launch its own email based annual business survey. The data collected would focus on similar data fields collected by York Region, as well as additional BR&E data points of interest, including demographic information.

The business data would be combined with York Region's data to deliver a Markham-focused business directory. The business directory would also be used to highlight the diversity of Markham's entrepreneurs, being searchable by ethnicity.

## **Recommendation #3: Invest in technology to support growth of City cultural facilities**

### **13. Implement a shared client relationship management (CRM) system for all three of the City's cultural facilities**

While the City's cultural facilities share a new city-wide registration system, there is not an integrated CRM that all three share to manage their contacts and support marketing.

A CRM should be implemented and focused on ensuring all client engagements – from program registrations and event attendance to rentals and walk-ins – are all tracked and leveraged to grow attendance at all three facilities.

The Events team should also be included in the CRM.

### **14. Implement a shared self-guided tour application to optimize visitor experiences**

Implementing a shared self-guided tour and virtual exhibition application will provide an opportunity to not only make exploring the City's cultural venues more optimized but can also be leveraged to showcase other community cultural destinations, such as public art and heritage properties.

### **15. Implement a shared ticketing system**

All three venues use different ticketing systems which isolates data between facilities. Implementing a shared ticketing platform integrated with a CRM would help ensure the ability to cross-market programming and derive client insights.

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City of Markham  
Department of Economic Growth, Culture and  
Entrepreneurship

Markham Civic Centre  
101 Town Centre Blvd.  
Markham, ON L3R 9W3  
Canada

Tel: 905.475.4878  
email: [edoinfo@markham.ca](mailto:edoinfo@markham.ca)

[MarkhamBusiness.ca](http://MarkhamBusiness.ca)

[MarkhamBusiness.ca](http://MarkhamBusiness.ca)