

Thornhill, 2002-12-09

To: Thornhill Seniors

We had a great meeting with the architect for the Community Centre expansion on Wednesday Dec 4th. Five Markham staff members were there to provide an overview of the proposal and assist with questions. Regional Councillor Bill O'Donnell participated in the overview, and discussion about the new seniors program. My assistant Joanne attended to help, and to gather more names.

The facility option favoured by most, was with a drop-in centre/lounge at the south end of the Community Centre. That location can be well-served by a John St bus; it is close to the library; and the south hall can accommodate lots of activities which require little setup. A therapeutic pool and other facilities would be located in the new north east quadrant of the community centre, with easy connections between the two components.

Thornhill Square plans call for a new family restaurant, or Starbucks, or something of that kind, to be located east of Santorini's, behind a new Shopper's Drug Mart. And we will pursue some safe connection between these facilities.

The ample lounge would be furnished with a kitchen, comfortable furniture, and meeting rooms; and it would be open virtually anytime day or night.

Markham staff provided an overview of the program run at the Markham Seniors (Older Adults) centre. In addition to the drop-in nature of the program, there are scheduled activities for most hours and days of the week. Membership there of over 1,000, supports programs for a full spectrum of interest, from the very active, to those who just want to lunch and gab with friends who meet there.

Some had knowledge of the McConachy Centre in Richmond Hill, the Centre in North York, and others. We heard a number of suggestions about greeters, about noise, about having a gerontologist assist with the design, and about some of the programs needed.

One key to the success of a Thornhill seniors program will be membership numbers. We need 750 members to qualify for the Markham Club model. A Club uses all the facilities of the seniors centre, prepares its own programs, and shares the centre with other users **only** if we are unable to attract enough members. A Club pays the Town \$20 annually per member; fees are charged for bingo, cards, bowling, etc to cover the cost of facilities and instructors, etc, and provide revenue for the Club to use as its management Committee chooses. Those who qualify for assistance can have some or most of their fees paid by the Town. If we have 750 to 1,200 members (estimates by some), we can negotiate favourable rates for bowling, theatre, buses, restaurants, food, admissions, etc. There is great power in numbers. Numbers give us a great bargaining position with the Town as well, to ensure sufficient facilities and Town staff are available to meet our needs.

So far, there is great interest from all the senior groups operating around the community—Golden 50's, Orchard Club, Glynnwood, Annswell Court, church groups, another small bowling group, etc. I will be requesting that each group provide us with names, so that we can begin building a registry of potential members. Names will permit us to keep everyone up to date. Each of us can help add names to this list. And note the age; Markham's requirement is 55, and not always respected; the Golden 50's means 50's. People will join for what our program offers.

I plan to schedule a meeting in February, to elect a steering committee who will pilot us through the formative stages. Experience of the 16-year-old Golden 50's Club will help; experience of the Markham Older Adults In Action program will help. Once we begin regular meetings to discuss programs and content, fees, rules, etc, Town staff will join us, and help in any way possible.

So; until we meet again, keep those names coming to me and my assistant Joanne.