

RESPONSE BY: Ricardo Mashregi, Candidate for Councillor Ward 1, City of Markham

Hello Ms. Wainberg,

I could answer your questions but I rather tell you a story that is very dear to me. The York Region Arts Council and its members can be the judge of our community's commitment and mine to the arts.

I took the role of Chair in 2011 of my local ratepayer association; in part to oversee Grandview Park undergo a major renovation, approved by Markham Council which will begin in the spring of 2019. Initially I thought this project would take two years and now it is entering its eighth and final year.

In 2008 Markham negotiated its very first Section 37 agreement with Liberty Development Corp. in relation to its World on Yonge complex located at Yonge and Doncaster in Thornhill. The agreement was for \$2 million to be used for community amenities in the Ward One Thornhill area of Markham.

In January, 2011, members of two local residents associations, the Grandview Area Residents Association (GARA), of which I am the Chair and Ward One South Thornhill Residents Inc. (WOSTRI), met with Councillor Burke of Thornhill Markham to solicit ideas on how to use these funds for our community. For two years, we went through a lengthy, open, transparent and inclusive process with the residents of West Thornhill to determine their priorities. A short list of the final amenities was then created by the steering committee volunteers. The residents chose four venues; a splash pad, an outdoor stage, multi-purpose sport court/community ice rink, and a skateboard spot including permanent washrooms. These venues will meet the recreational and cultural needs of everyone, from toddlers to seniors.

For the next two years, a working committee of volunteers dedicated hundreds of unpaid hours offered with great enthusiasm and commitment. They researched various amenities, provided feedback to staff, attended many meetings, and hoped for the best. Our community is rich in volunteers with expertise –professional artists and a art professor (Paul Kelly) to lead the community voice on the mural project (see link below), local musicians (members of the Thornhill Community Band) supporting the outdoor stage and local architects to help with the splash pad designs, youth representatives and a local owner of a bicycle and skateboard business working on the skateboard spot and sports enthusiasts helping with the multi-purpose athletic court and community ice rink concepts. Unfortunately the multi-purpose sport court/community ice rink was not possible due to reasons beyond our control. I am hopeful one day as Councillor it will be made right in another area of Thornhill Markham.

The Thornhill Community Band (60 volunteer musicians) will provide a series of concerts in Grandview Park throughout the summer. I plan to engage our local theatre company for live plays and offer movies in the park for families and lobby Markham Council for funds.

The location and design process has been long and laborious, but in the end, fruitful. I appreciate the efforts of Councillor Burke, City staff, the GARA and WOSTRI Executive members and **especially our local volunteers**.

I look forward to seeing the community vision come to life, enriching the culture and recreation opportunities for our residents, for many years to come.

Ricardo Mashregi
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Mural Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWhxA0vhCZk>