

# Keep it sustainable, York Region, group asks

BY DAVID FLEISCHER  
Staff Writer

Sustainability is becoming a catch-all word used by some without knowing what it means.

Leslie Luxemberger and his colleagues at the Sustainable Urban Development Association are hoping to change that and show York Region how to make those principles part of our everyday lives.

"York Region is already a leader in sustainability compared to most other municipalities," Mr. Luxemberger said.

Registered as a charitable corporation in 2005, Sustainable's goal is to increase awareness of sustainability issues in growing cities.

Mr. Luxemberger praised efforts in York, including recent moves in Vaughan and East Gwillimbury to ensure new homes are built to more stringent Energy Star standards.

A subdivision of 34 of the greenest homes in the country is being built in Newmarket.

Downtown Markham, now under construction at

Warden and Hwy. 7, is slated to be one of the most environmentally-friendly developments in the country.

Also worthy of mention is the region's natural heritage system and programs such as the Smart Commute car-pooling program.

York Region has been ahead of the game in building more compact urban developments, said John Waller, director of long range and strategic planning.

The region released a best-practices report outlining 42 initiatives by municipalities

across the country. It is now in a position to cherry-pick the "best of the best" ideas, Mr. Waller said.

Nonetheless, the region continues to offset its successes by promoting typical suburban low-density building, Mr. Luxemberger warned.

For all the talk of transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly green developments, Mr. Luxemberger said we need to be watchful.

People are aware of global warming and a possible energy crisis, but we are making

few day-to-day changes, he said.

The public still has much to learn about land use and the need to advance beyond the single-family homes we have become accustomed to, he said.

Driving changes is Places to Grow, provincial legislation mandating 40 per cent of all new development take place in built-up areas, rather than sprawling into rural areas.

Instead of a 40/60 split, Sustainable calls for York Region to aim for 65/35.

"We're convinced... up to 50 per cent of (undeveloped) land can be saved," he said.

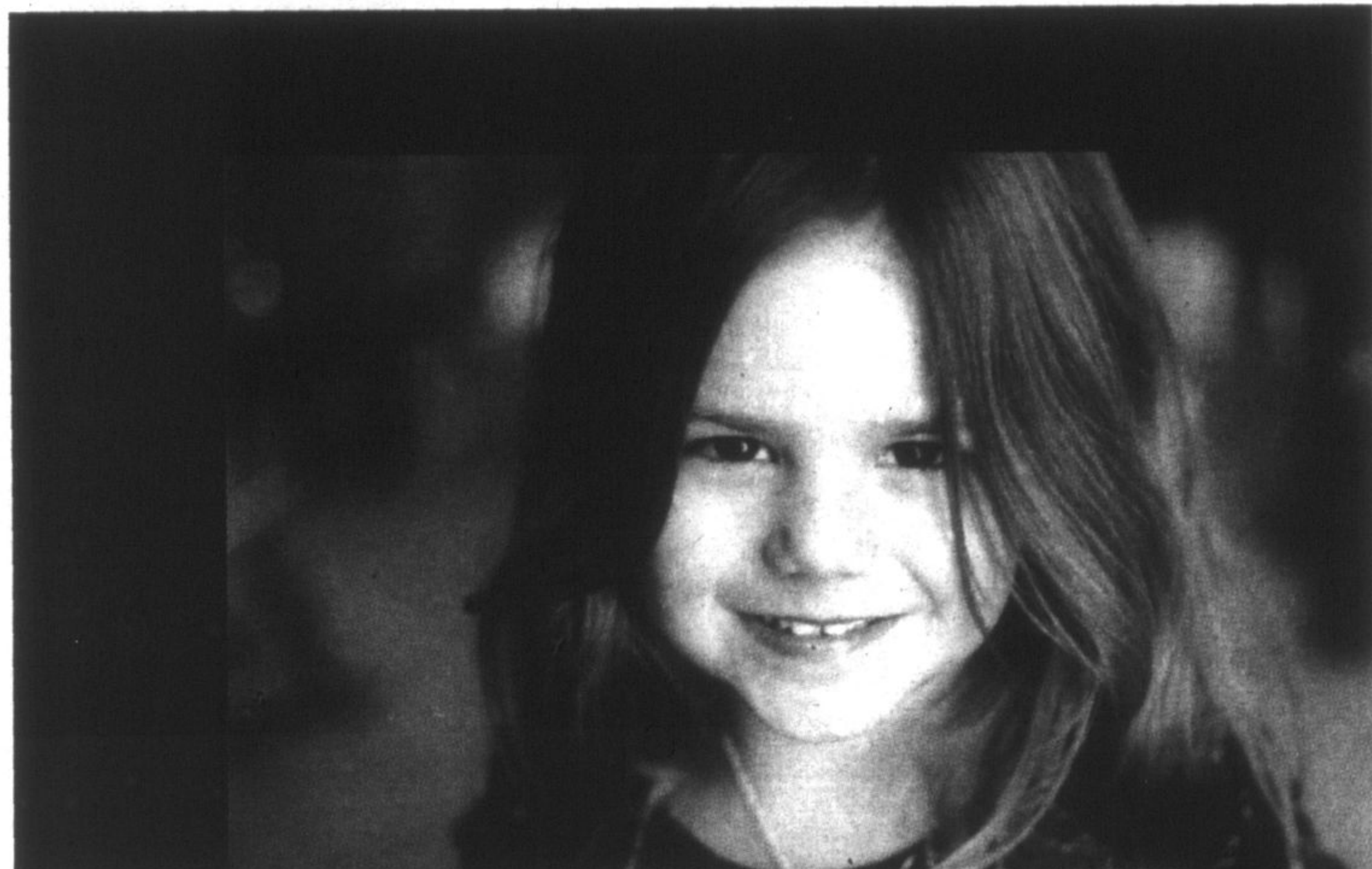
Sustainable's answer is a theoretical development called Newburg. The mixed-use neighbourhood could house 10,000 people and jobs per square kilometre, the association stated.

More than half the population would be housed in low-rise, multi-unit dwellings.

## HOUSING FACTS IN YORK REGION

By the numbers:

- ▶ 72%: Percentage of our housing stock that is single detached homes;
- ▶ 57%: Projected percentage of single detached homes by 2031;
- ▶ 119: Area, in square kilometres, of rural regional lands slated to be lost to low density development;
- ▶ 4,239: Residents per sq. km in Toronto;
- ▶ 2,814: Residents per sq. km in York Region projected for 2031;



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## Regional Council Workshop

### 2008 Operating Business Plans and Budget

York Regional Council will be holding a Public Workshop on **Thursday, February 28, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.** in the Seminar Room at the York Region Administrative Centre, 17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket, Ontario for the purpose of considering the Region's 2008 Operating Business Plans and Budget, including the allocation of savings from GTA Pooling dollars. The Business Plans and Budget are posted on the Region's website, [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)

York Regional Council will consider public input at this workshop.

Please contact Lloyd Russell, Commissioner of Finance and Treasurer at (905) 830-4444, ext. 1610 or [lloyd.russell@york.ca](mailto:lloyd.russell@york.ca) if you have any questions regarding the Business Plans and Budget.

Please contact Denis Kelly, Regional Clerk at (905) 830-4444, ext. 1300 or [denis.kelly@york.ca](mailto:denis.kelly@york.ca) by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, February 25, 2008 if you wish to make oral or written submissions to Regional Council.

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