

Markham York University campus starting to take shape

BY AMANDA PERSICO
apersico@yrmg.com

Markham's five-acre York University campus remains on target to open for the 2020-21 school year.

About 4,500 students are expected to attend the new campus located at Enterprise Boulevard and Ravis Road during the first school year. That is expected to increase to about 9,300 by the third year.

"Things are moving forward and we're excited," said York University Development Corporation (YUDC) president Bud Purves, during a recent Markham campus committee meeting.

Signs will soon be posted on the site and the innovation and community engagement hub is currently under construction, located above the retail lobby of 169 Enterprise Blvd. in downtown Markham.

Technology and business are the two major themes intertwined in the new programs offered at the campus.

"Business is huge," said York University academic vice-president and Provost Rhonda Lenton.

"We heard this broadly: this campus had to include business."

The "locked in" faculties include: arts, media, performance and design, education, environmental studies, liberal arts and professional studies, engineering, and science.

Several other faculties are interested in joining the Markham campus later on.

The campus will also host post-graduate and Seneca College programs, Lenton said, creating easier transitions between college, university and post-graduate studies.

"This will be a very comprehensive campus," she said.

York is also seeking opportunities to share

services with the city and developers, such as public library use, broadband Internet connectivity, recreational use of the Pan Am Centre and YMCA, and hosting lectures in the nearby movie theatre.

York is moving away from library stacks and toward digital materials and a limited reserve of textbooks.

"We don't want to replicate the problem of collections," Lenton said. "Most universities are moving their collections to storage facilities. We can't afford space in libraries for collections."

Students need the space to study and for computer labs, she added.

Students at the Markham campus will have access to York's main library delivery service.

York will also offer continuing education and professional studies for people looking to change careers or add or improve skills, Lenton said.

The Faculty of Education is also building a relationship with local school boards to foster student innovation at the Innovation and Community Engagement hub.

Student housing needs were discussed during the last York U committee meeting in June.

An influx of students provides more incentive to create rooming houses, Purves said, which is not the university's plan.

Instead, YUDC wants to find student housing solutions within the plethora of condos in the area.

"We need to find a solution that is best for students and best for Markham," Purves said. "We don't want students in unlicensed, unsafe basement apartments."

YUDC conducted a preliminary analysis of the rental housing market near the cam-



Supplied image

An artist's rendition of the new Markham York University campus.

pus site.

Currently, there are about 650 units or 1,350 beds in the \$800 per month, per bed range, and that is expected increase to about 2,000 units or 4,100 beds by 2024.

"We don't want this to be a real-estate project for makeshift rental income," Purves said. "This is a student life project. A market solution will drive away basement apartments and rooming houses."

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