



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Draft Vaughan Official Plan, 2010

Date:	July 29, 2010
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	Pg10061

SUMMARY

The City of Vaughan has requested comments on a draft new Official Plan for the City.

The Plan provides for extensive development on the north side of Steeles Avenue and also in the Yonge corridor north of Steeles Avenue. This development is premised on extending the Spadina subway to Highway 7, extending the Yonge subway or providing other rapid transit on Yonge Street up to Highway 7 and providing higher order transit along Steeles Avenue. While the Spadina extension is fully committed, the Yonge extension has not yet received any funding commitment and is not high priority for the City and the TTC; and the higher order transit on Steeles is even less of a priority.

Until there is a commitment to funding transit improvements in the Yonge and Steeles Corridors, Toronto needs assurance that development in these corridors will not have an adverse impact on Toronto's services and infrastructure. Staff have presented these concerns to Vaughan staff and had initial discussions towards their resolution. This report recommends that staff continue discussions with Vaughan staff to ensure that the new Vaughan Official Plan addresses these issues to Toronto's satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning Division recommends that:

1. Council direct staff to continue discussions with Vaughan staff to ensure that the draft Vaughan Official Plan will provide certainty to the City of Toronto that development in the Steeles corridor and in the Yonge-Steeles Secondary Plan will not have an adverse impact on the City's services and infrastructure; and

2. Council direct staff to report further on the outcome of these discussions and recommendations for any further action the City may need to take.

Financial Impact

The recommendations will have no financial impact.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The City of Vaughan embarked on a review of its Official Plan in 2007 as part of developing a Growth Management Study for the City known as 'Vaughan Tomorrow'. Details can be found at www.vaughantomorrow.ca. Besides the proposed new overall Official Plan, new secondary plans have also been developed through this process, including plans for the Yonge - Steeles Corridor and the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. This report will also address these plans.

'Vaughan Tomorrow' involved the typical array of Background Studies including a Housing Analysis and Employment Lands Needs Study and a Commercial Review to estimate the amount of development that would be required to accommodate growth in Vaughan to 2031, and the likely locations of this development.

A complementary Transportation Master Plan is also being prepared as part of the 'Vaughan Tomorrow' process and a public open house for this plan was held on June 8th.

Timing

Vaughan staff notified the City of the statutory Open Houses for the Secondary Plans in March of this year and for the draft Official Plan in April.

A 'Request for Comments' on the draft Official Plan was received in early May and a statutory public meeting was held on May 17th. A further public meeting was held by the Vaughan Committee of the Whole on July 28th and the new Official Plan is proposed to be adopted on September 7th.

A 'Request for Comments' on the Yonge-Steeles Secondary Plan was received in early June and a statutory public meeting was held on June 14th. It will be considered by Committee of the Whole on August 31st and then considered for adoption by the Vaughan Council along with the overall plan on September 7th.

Following its adoption by Vaughan Council, the Official Plan and secondary plans will be sent to the Region of York for approval under the *Planning Act*. The City will also have an opportunity to comment to York Region on the plans.

The Chief Planner sent a letter to Vaughan's Commissioner of Planning on July 2nd advising of City Planning staff's concerns with the proposed Official Plan and Yonge-Steeles Secondary Plan.

The planning context

Vaughan's draft new Official Plan fits into a context of other plans and strategies:

Regional Context

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe:

All Official Plans must conform to the Growth Plan, which requires that by 2014, 40% of all new units must be inside the 2006 built up area. In addition, the Growth Plan:

- Identifies an Urban Growth Centre at Highway 7 and Jane (Vaughan UGC) connected by higher order transit to the existing Spadina subway line;
- Identifies an Urban Growth Centre at Highway 7 and Yonge (Richmond Hill UGC) connected by higher order transit to the existing Yonge subway line;
- Shows a higher order transit connection between the Vaughan and Richmond Hill UGCs; and
- Requires that areas around major transit stations be planned to achieve increased residential and employment densities and support existing and planned transit.

The York Region Official Plan:

A new regional Official Plan was developed in response to the Growth Plan and adopted in December 2009. It shows:

- the Centres and subway extensions shown in the Growth Plan;
- a Regional Corridor along Highway 7 and running north up Yonge Street from Steeles Avenue; and
- a higher order transit corridor running along Steeles Avenue from Highway 427 to Durham Region.

Richmond Hill / Langstaff Gateway Urban Growth Centre

Both Richmond Hill and Markham have proposed Secondary Plans for their portions of the Urban Growth Centre. The plans provide for substantially more growth than would be needed to achieve the Growth Plan target of 200 residents and jobs per hectare. York Region is undertaking a review of these proposals in order to develop a coordinated framework for their development. This review will include a transportation study which will review the UGC in its regional context, including the Yonge Corridor and the Yonge Subway extension.

The Metrolinx Regional Transit Plan:

‘The Big Move’ implements the transit policies of the Growth Plan. It shows:

- the Spadina and Yonge subway extensions (to be completed within 15 years);
- rapid transit along Steeles Avenue eastwards from Jane Street (to be completed within 25 years);
- rapid transit connecting the Vaughan and Richmond Hill Urban Growth Centres along Highway 7 and Highway 407; and
- mobility hubs at Steeles - Jane and at Steeles - Yonge, as well as at the Vaughan and Richmond Hill / Langstaff Gateway Urban Growth Centres.

Toronto Context

The City of Toronto Official Plan:

The City’s Official Plan was adopted in 2002, well before the Growth Plan. It shows:

- transit corridors for the Spadina and Yonge subway extensions into York Region;
- transit corridors pointing into Vaughan along Jane Street and along the CP rail line that crosses Steeles Avenue to the east of Islington Avenue;
- a Transit Corridor on Steeles from Jane Street to Dufferin Street;
- a Transit Priority segment on Steeles Avenue from Jane St to the GO Line east of Kennedy Road;
- an Avenue on Yonge Street south of Steeles Avenue down to the North York Centre; and
- a series of Employment Districts, Neighbourhoods and the York University Institutional Area along the south side of Steeles Avenue across from Vaughan – Steeles Avenue is not identified as an ‘Avenue’ on Map 2 of the Official Plan.

The York University Secondary Plan:

Council adopted this plan in December 2009. It replaced the existing secondary plan partly in response to the extension of the Spadina subway through the university campus and north to Vaughan. It shows a Mixed Use Corridor along Steeles Avenue, with higher densities in the western area near the subway station, and primarily office or research uses in the eastern area near Keele Street. The Plan states that development in the corridor should be complementary to and compatible with development on the north side of Steeles Avenue in the City of Vaughan.

Vaughan Context

Secondary Plan for the Steeles Corridor – Jane to Keele (OPA 620):

This plan was adopted by Vaughan in 2006 and approved by the OMB in 2008. The plan:

- permits high density mixed use development ‘supportive of existing and planned transit services’ along the Steeles Corridor; and
- provides for the ‘early establishment of’ an east-west primary road north of Steeles Avenue that is ‘critical to the implementation of’ the Secondary Plan.

The City of Toronto provided input to the development of the secondary plan and was a party at the OMB hearing for OPA 620. The City was satisfied that its concerns were addressed in the Secondary Plan approved by the OMB.

The draft Official Plan identifies this area as the Steeles West Centre. The Secondary Plan will be included in Vaughan’s new Official Plan with ‘no changes to its purpose and effect’ and no changes that will ‘affect the substance of the document.’

Yonge Steeles Corridor Secondary Plan:

This plan has been developed over the past two years and is to be included in Vaughan’s new Official Plan. Its primary purpose is to ensure that future development and densities recognize the introduction of the Yonge subway extension or other rapid transit north to Richmond Hill. It will also implement the policies of the Growth Plan, Regional Plan and Vaughan Official Plan for the area. City of Toronto staff have been on a working group for the secondary plan. The draft secondary plan provides for mixed use development

along Steeles Avenue and Yonge Street with highest densities focussed on the Yonge and Steeles intersection and proposed subway station.

Markham Context

Markham Yonge Steeles Study:

The Town of Markham completed a study of the Yonge Steeles corridor in Markham in 2008. City of Toronto staff were on a working group for the study. The study recommended an average density of 2.5 FSI with highest densities near the proposed station at the Yonge and Steeles intersection and lower densities near existing low density neighbourhoods. The Study also emphasized that both servicing and transportation capacity would require significant upgrades to accommodate development and recommended that Holding By-laws be used to ensure that adequate infrastructure is available for development. The study recommendations have been approved by Markham but not yet adopted as a secondary plan or included in the Markham Official Plan. City Planning staff continue to monitor the Markham study.

COMMENTS

Overall approach

The draft Plan’s approach to growth management addresses population and employment growth ‘allocated’ to Vaughan by York Region. The Region’s growth is assigned by the provincial Growth Plan (see Table 1). Vaughan is not proposing any more growth than has already been approved at the provincial and regional levels. The draft Plan is concerned with where the growth should be located.

Table 1: Population and Employment Growth, York and Vaughan, 2001- 2031.

	Population		Employment	
	2001 / 2006	2031	2001 / 2006	2031
York (Growth Plan)	760,000*	1,500,000	390,000*	780,000
Vaughan (York ROP)	249,300**	418,800	162,200 **	266,100

* 2001 ** 2006

The draft Plan’s approach to directing growth is also consistent with the following directions provided by the provincial Growth Plan and the York Region Official Plan:

- provide for a significant component of the growth through intensification in the existing urban area;
- plan for intensification and transit that support each other with highest development densities near transit stations;
- resulting in a system of transit-based centres and corridors;
- protect large stable residential areas from further development or intensification;
- and
- preserve and protect employment areas for employment uses.

The Toronto Official Plan follows a similar approach.

In Vaughan’s draft Official Plan, this results in an urban structure that emphasizes intensification areas and complementary higher order transit lines that are also shown in some or all of the higher level plans.

Some of these intensification areas and transit lines are close to Toronto and can be expected to have an impact on the City. They are summarized in Table 2, and shown in Figure 1.

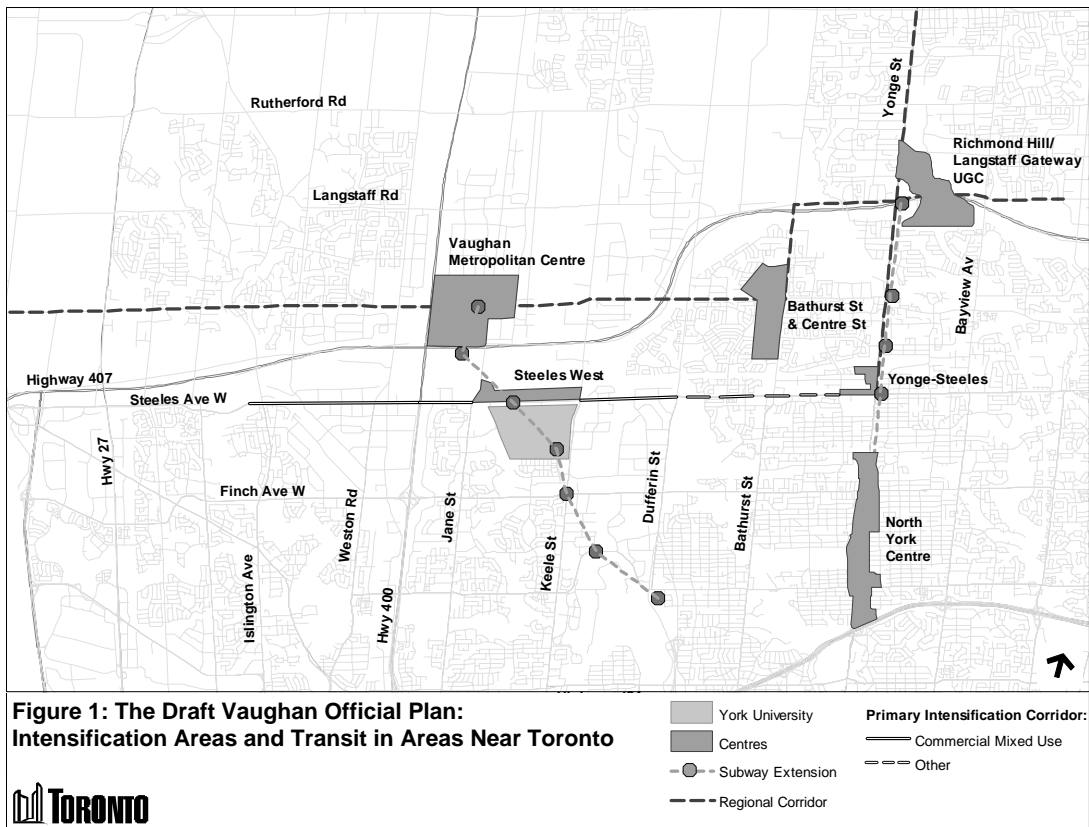
Table 2: Vaughan’s Intensification Areas and Transit Lines Close to Toronto

Intensification Areas		Transit Lines	
Location	Upper Level Plan	Location	Upper Level Plan
Vaughan Metropolitan Centre	Growth Plan, York Region Official Plan (ROP)	Spadina subway extension to Vaughan Metropolitan Centre	Growth Plan, ROP, Big Move
Steeles West Centre	ROP*	Spadina subway extension;	Growth Plan, ROP, Big Move
Yonge Steeles Centre	ROP*	Yonge subway extension to Richmond Hill	Growth Plan, ROP, Big Move
Steeles West (Yonge – Islington) Primary Intensification Corridor	ROP*	Regional Rapid Transit Corridor along Steeles from Yonge to Highway 27	ROP, Big Move (east from Jane to Yonge)
Yonge Street Primary Intensification Corridor	ROP (Regional Corridor)	Yonge subway extension	Growth Plan, ROP, Big Move

* The ROP provides for Local Centres and Local Corridors and includes policies for them. They are not identified specifically on the Regional Urban Structure map, but are to be identified in Area Municipal Plans

City staff support this overall approach to the urban structure and managing growth. Staff are concerned, however, with ensuring that development near Toronto will be supported by adequate transit infrastructure and other community services. While the Spadina extension is fully committed, the Yonge extension has not yet received any funding commitment and is not high a priority for the City and the TTC; and the higher order transit on Steeles Avenue is even less of a priority.

Staff’s concerns largely relate to the proposed development densities on the north side of Steeles Avenue and on the west side of Yonge Street. The following summary of the amount of growth and development proposed in these areas provides the context for these concerns.



Growth in Intensification Areas

The draft Official Plan sets out land uses and densities in centres and corridors, providing for Mixed Use development at densities that are consistent with the York Region Official Plan: 2.5 FSI in corridors and 3.5 FSI or more in the centres around stations on the two subway extensions. The potential development permitted by the Official Plan is likely greater than will be realized (in much the same way as Toronto's Official Plan provides for potentially more units and floorspace than will be required to accommodate growth in the city). There will, however, be significant residential growth in the areas adjacent to Toronto, but much less non-residential growth.

Housing growth

The Housing Analysis estimates that 30,430 new housing units could be accommodated in the identified intensification areas in Vaughan. This includes 12,000 units in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, 4,800 units in the Yonge and Steeles area and 5,400 units in the Steeles corridor, most of which will be in the Steeles West Centre. According to the study, most of these units will be required to meet Vaughan's future needs in conformance with the Regional Official Plan and Regional land budget analysis.

Non-residential growth

The Employment Analysis indicates little potential for major office development in the Steeles and Yonge corridors, except at locations close to the proposed subway stations.

The Commercial Review indicates there is likely to be increased local office, service commercial and retail development in the Steeles Corridor, but it will mainly be associated with residential development in the Steeles West and Yonge-Steeles Centres.

Concerns with phasing of development

City Planning staff's main concern is ensuring that development in Vaughan has acceptable – or not unduly adverse – impacts on Toronto's infrastructure and services, and in particular, that the draft Plan ensures that development is phased to coincide with major infrastructure improvement, especially to public transit. These concerns focus on two areas: Yonge-Steeles Secondary Plan area, and the Steeles Corridor outside of the Steeles West Centre.

Steeles Corridor

The draft Plan shows relatively large areas designated for Commercial Mixed Use fronting on to Steeles Avenue between Islington Avenue and Jane Street, and between Keele Street and Dufferin Street. Commercial Mixed Use permits offices, retail, hotels and gas stations but not residential uses. Retail uses may not exceed 50% of the total floor area on a lot, and office uses may not exceed 12,500m². (134,500 sq.ft.) per lot, unless they are within 500m of a subway station. The draft Plan allows up to 2.5 FSI and 8-storey buildings.

Neither the Employment Analysis nor the Commercial Review background studies see these sections of the Steeles corridor as a major focus of growth; and despite the density provisions of the draft plan, future development is likely to be similar to what is typically found there today.

Given these relatively low growth expectations, it would be reasonable to continue the present application-by-application approach to dealing with development in these areas. At present, the City of Toronto is able to comment on individual applications with respect to their compatibility with development in Toronto and their impact on Toronto's transportation facilities and other services. If the impact of the proposed development is too large, the City can request a smaller development or perhaps the use of Holding By-laws through which development may be delayed until adequate infrastructure and services are available or other conditions are met.

Yonge – Steeles

The draft Secondary Plan provides for its highest densities of 5.0 FSI at the Yonge-Steeles intersection, stepping down to 3.5 FSI and 2.5 FSI with greater distance from the intersection and the proposed subway station. This level of development could have major impacts on Toronto's infrastructure and services, especially before the subway or other rapid transit is provided in this area.

The draft Secondary Plan addresses the coordination of development and provision of services:

- It requires a block plan for all significant developments; and the block plan should include a phasing plan that will show how orderly development and coordination with the provision of services will be achieved.
- It provides for the use of Holding By-laws through which development may be delayed until adequate infrastructure and services are available.

Vaughan staff have indicated their intention to strengthen these policies to address development levels before rapid transit or subway funding is committed. City of Toronto staff will continue discussions with Vaughan staff to ensure that the City's interests are recognized.

Need for Further Transportation Analysis

City staff have not seen any background transportation analysis for the draft Official Plan, the Yonge-Steeles Secondary Plan, or the companion Master Transportation Plan. Vaughan staff indicate that they hope to be able to provide the transportation analysis in the near future. This will be an essential input for staff's assessment of the impacts of the proposed development, and how much development should be restricted before transit and other services and facilities are extended.

Changed densities in the Steeles West Centre (OPA 620 area)

The draft Official Plan's Land Use Schedule for Steeles Avenue West between Jane and Keele Streets shows higher densities than those in the Secondary Plan approved by the OMB in 2008, and which were acceptable to the City of Toronto. Vaughan staff have assured us that the density numbers shown on the Land Use maps will be deleted and that the permitted densities will be those shown in the Secondary Plan approved by the OMB in 2008.

Staff discussions with Vaughan

At an initial meeting on July 28th, Vaughan staff agreed to work with City Planning staff to continue to address our concerns with the phasing of development in the Yonge-Steeles area. This report recommends that staff continue discussions with Vaughan staff to ensure that the new Vaughan Official Plan addresses these issues to Toronto's satisfaction.

Depending on the outcome of these discussions, the City may need to press its case with York Region which must approve the new Vaughan Official Plan before it comes into force.

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