

SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MAY 27, 2002

OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT 600 **PROPOSED HIGHWAY 400 OVERPASSES IN BLOCKS 32 AND 33**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning and the Commissioner of Development Services and Public Works recommend:

1. THAT this staff report be received and that, based on the contents of this report, the two primary road overpasses - one in Block 32 and one in Block 33 – not be deleted from OPA 600;
2. That this staff report and resulting Council Minutes be sent to the Region of York for information purposes.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to respond to the following Council direction of February 11, 2002:

1. That the deputation, and written submission dated February 4, 2002, of Ms. Elvira Caria, Vellore Woods Ratepayers Association, 15 Bunting Drive, Woodbridge, L4H 2E8, be received and referred to staff for a report, within forty-five days, addressing the issues identified, and outlining the steps and processes required to delete the overpass from Block 32;
2. That the Region of York be requested to widen Weston Road from Rutherford Road to Major Mackenzie Drive as part of their 2003 Capital Projects; and
3. That the written submission of Ms. Nadia Magarelli, Weston Downs Ratepayers Association, 81 Blackburn Boulevard, Woodbridge, L4L 7J5, dated February 4, 2002, be received.

The following discussion also addresses the two primary road crossings in Block 33 as provided in OPA 600, in order to give Council more comprehensive information on this issue.

Background - Analysis and Options

At its meeting on February 11, 2002, Council referred the deputation and written submission of Ms. Elvira Caria, Vellore Woods Ratepayers Association to staff for a report, addressing the issues identified, and outlining the steps required to delete the Highway 400 overpass from Block 32. The written submission of Ms. Nadia Magarelli, Weston Downs Ratepayers Association, dated February 4, 2002, was also received.

Block 32 is divided by Highway 400 running north-south through the centre of the block, and is part of the community of Vellore - Urban Village 1.

In Block 33, west of Highway 400 the lands in the vicinity of both crossing are designated 'High Performance Employment Area'. East of the highway at the southerly crossing, the lands are designated 'Low Density Residential'. At the northerly crossing the lands are designated 'Low Density' and "Medium Density Residential/Commercial".

Land Use Status

The lands in the vicinity of the Block 32 bridge crossing are designated low density residential (Block 32 West), and medium density residential/commercial (Block 32 East-Vaughan Centre).

Ratepayers' Issues

The ratepayer associations who submitted deputations to Council on Feb. 11, 2002, identified the following issues associated with the Block 32 primary road/overpass:

- The road will be a source of congestion, traffic infiltration and "short-cutting".
- The road will physically divide the community in two.
- The road will be a safety hazard in neighbourhoods and near parks and schools.
- The road will cause noise, visual and ecological pollution.
- The road and overpass will lower property values and encourage loitering.
- The road will interfere with the existing access to Canada's Wonderland, from Rutherford Road, and may reroute Wonderland traffic through Block 32 neighbourhoods.

The ratepayer submissions express a preference for widening Weston Road, Rutherford Road, Major Mackenzie Drive, and other regional arterial roads, instead of building the overpass. They also note their concerns respecting incorrect or misleading information provided to them previously, respecting the proposed road and overpass.

Planning and Engineering Analysis

It is the policy of the Region of York Official Plan (Section 6.1.15):

"to encourage all local municipalities to ensure that continuous mid-concession block collector roads are implemented east-west and north-south in all new urban developments."

There is a significant Regional interest in ensuring the adequacy of the transportation network, and the arterial network in particular. York Region also has concerns when local decisions respecting the local and primary road network impact upon the operation of Regional roads.

Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 400, identified four primary road crossings of Highway 400 – two in Block 32, and two in Block 33 - to accommodate east-west traffic that is expected to increase as a result of the implementation of the Plan. The need for these four Highway 400 crossings was originally identified by ENTRA Consulting, the City's transportation consultants for the OPA 400 process. These primary road crossings of Highway 400 facilitate east-west movement but do not provide access to Highway 400 from the local road network.

Subsequent decisions have now reduced the number of planned crossings from four to two.

The lands in Block 32 were the subject of OMB proceedings, which resulted in the elimination of the northerly Highway 400 crossing in Block 32, by Order of the Board. This decision is reflected on OPA 600, Schedule B. The remaining bridge crossing in Block 32 is in the southern portion of the block, and is intended to join Ashberry Blvd., west of the highway, with a road to be determined on the east side of Highway 400. The Board was satisfied that this primary road crossing was sufficient, and satisfied the intent of the Plan.

The block plan for Block 33 East was approved with one primary road crossing of Highway 400 in the northern part of the block (America Avenue). When Block 33 East was approved, it was determined that the elimination of one crossing – the southerly crossing at Tiera Avenue - would not undermine the Plan's intent to ensure an adequate road network to address the community's long term transportation requirements. OPA 600 provides flexibility in terms of the implementation of the primary road system, provided that the intent of its policies is maintained. Consequently, some approved block plans have provided fewer primary roads than are shown in

OPA 600. The block plan for Block 33 West, currently in preparation, provides for the northerly primary road crossing of Highway 400, but does not provide for a southerly connection.

When the OPA 600 Transportation Review was completed by the City's transportation consultants, Totten, Sims, Hubicki, it concluded that two primary road crossings of Highway 400 should be protected, one in each of Block 32 and 33, but did not make a recommendation on the timing of construction of either overpass. The Primary Road crossings of Highway 400 were recommended for protection as key components of the City's transportation network, to provide proper, balanced traffic flow. They will enable Vellore residents to travel within their community and traverse Highway 400, without having to rely completely on Regional arterial roads which mainly carry traffic bypassing the block. This opportunity is of particular importance in the vicinity of Highway 400, where highway crossings within Vellore are currently limited to Rutherford Road, Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road, and uses such as Canada's Wonderland and Vaughan Mills Mall are expected to generate large traffic volumes for the foreseeable future. The primary road in Block 32 will be designed so as not to interfere with the access to Canada's Wonderland, or permit Wonderland traffic to access the primary road and infiltrate Block 32 via the highway crossing.

Unlike the typical 4-lane, mid-block collector roads elsewhere in the City (ie. Ansley Grove Road, New Westminster Drive), primary roads (and their highway crossings) will be 2 lanes wide, capable of accommodating buses. They are expected to have a number of stop signs and other signs and signals along their routes, thereby limiting vehicle speeds and addressing safety considerations. They will not be designed to accommodate the higher speeds associated with the arterial roads, and they will not accommodate high volumes of traffic. They will operate at speeds lower than on a collector road, and should create no more noise, visual or ecological pollution than other similar two-lane roads. The scale of the road will serve to achieve this within the community.

The suggested widening of other arterial roads, instead of constructing the primary road crossings of Highway 400, is not a viable alternative. York Region already intends to widen the arterials throughout the Vellore community to six lanes each, just to accommodate forecast traffic. Further widening to eight or more lanes is not an option, given the limits to the scale of the arterial road allowances, the additional private property road dedications which would be required, and the urban design implications for the community. The main impact of eliminating the primary road crossing of Highway 400 will be to offer Vellore residents no alternative to the arterials, when they wish to cross over the highway.

To remove the Highway 400 bridge crossings in OPA 600, an amendment to OPA 600 would be required. A detailed, over-all transportation planning study will need to be prepared to determine the implications of such an action on the traffic requirements of OPA 600, the impacts on the Regional Road network, and what new provisions would be required in the Plan to accommodate the increase in traffic expected over the Plan's time horizon. This process would involve full public consultation and would take approximately a year to complete. No provision for such a study has been included in the 2002 Budget, and further requirements could be identified in the study, entailing costs exceeding \$200,000. A Class Environmental Assessment (EA) approval will be required prior to the construction of the overpasses. Any possible environmental impacts associated with these facilities, as well as alternatives to them, will form part of this EA process.

Conclusion

In consideration of the above, Staff conclude that the Highway 400 primary road/bridge crossings in Block 32 and 33 must continue to be protected, and should remain in OPA 600. In view of the amount of development already in place south of Major Mackenzie Drive in Vellore, the primary road crossing in Block 32 is required, and should proceed expeditiously. North of Major Mackenzie Drive, where the block plans west of Highway 400 are not yet approved, the future crossing in Block 33 must continue to be protected, and further transportation requirements must

be included in the next Official Plan Amendment #600 Review. By then, the City may be in a better position to determine when the crossing should be constructed.

However, should Council so direct, the implications of and justification for a decision to remove these crossings from the Plan will need to be assessed through a major transportation study and/or Class EA. Such a study would be required to determine the transportation infrastructure requirements necessary to accommodate future traffic volumes on Regional Roads as well as any implications for City streets (including the potential for traffic infiltration into neighbourhoods) in their absence. Terms of Reference would be required to retain consultants to undertake the study, to determine the requirements necessary to delete the Highway 400 bridge crossings, as a basis for commencing a Public Hearing process to amend OPA 600. An estimated budget of \$150,000 - \$200,000 would be required to undertake this study; depending on its findings, additional work and associated costs might also emerge. These amounts were not included in the City's 2002 budget.

Staff do not support this action, based on recent transportation analysis completed during the OPA 400 Review in 2000, which concluded with Council's adoption of OPA 600.

Attachments

1. Written Submission, Vellore Woods Ratepayers Association, dated February 4, 2002
2. Written Submission, Weston Downs Ratepayers Association, dated February 4, 2002
3. Schedule "B" to Official Plan Amendment #600

Report prepared by:

Wayne L. McEachern, Manager, Policy & Special Studies, ext. 8026
Paul Robinson, Senior Policy Planner, ext. 8410
Brendan Holly, Senior Manager, Development Engineering, ext 8250

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL DeANGELIS
Commissioner of Planning

FRANK MIELE, Commissioner of
Development Services and Public Works

/CM

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VELLORE WOODS RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

February 4, 2002

DEPUTATION: Elvira Caria, representing Vellore Woods Ratepayers Association.
RE: BLOCK 32 WEST —PROPOSED OVERPASS

The Vellore Woods Ratepayers Association hereby request the City of Vaughan to initiate an *Official Plan Amendment* to *delete* the proposed Overpass in Block 32 West for the following reasons:

1. The proposed overpass which is slated to function as a "primary" road according to OPA 400 and OPA 600, will in essence turn in to an "arterial" road causing serious traffic infiltration, congestion, and will undoubtedly be used as a "short-cut" for motorists trying to avoid gridlock on surrounding arterial roads. To suggest that this overpass would be used only for local "short-trips" would be quite naïve of the City. Should this overpass exist, it would span from Pinevalley Drive to Jane Street!! This doesn't sound like a "short-trip" to our community. In fact, this community is already plagued with traffic issues because of our close proximity to Highway 400. *We do not need another highway in our Community!!!!* Instead, our Ratepayers Association urge Council and City staff to *protect* our neighborhood, *protect* the children in our homes, and do what is right for the people in Block 32 West: **DELETE THE PROPOSED OVERPASS AND SPEND YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE MONEY ELSEWHERE. SPEND THE MONEY WHERE IT IS TRULY AND MOST SENSIBLY NEEDED.**
 - THE VELLORE WOODS RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION BELIEVES THE EMPHASIS SHOULD BE SPENT ON IMPROVING, EXPANDING AND BUILDING REGIONAL ROADS SURROUNDING OUR COMMUNITY. WE ASK FOR THE ACCELERATION OF ROADWAY WIDENING:
 - WE ASK COUNCIL TO REDIRECT MONEY AND URGENTLY WORK ON EXTENDING RUTHERFORD RD, WESTON RD, AND MAJOR MACKENZIE TO A REALISTIC SITUATION THAT WILL ALLEVIATE THE PRESENT TRAFFIC CHAOS IN OUR CITY. IN FACT WE ASK COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE EXPANSION OF WESTON RD TO NO LATER THAN 2003. WE ALSO ASK COUNCIL TO EXTEND RUTHERFORD TO 6 LANES AND MAJOR MACKENZIE TO 4 LANES.
 - THE RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS THE "NECESSITY" OF THIS OVERPASS. WHAT WERE THE JUSTIFICATIONS TO KEEP IT IN THE OFFICIAL PLAN?? HAVE THOSE CONDITIONS CHANGED ???

2. Because of its location, the creation of an overpass would essentially split the neighborhood in two. There is already a very interesting "phenomenon" happening in our community. When stopped on the streets and asked "where do you live?"...the neighborhood is already defined and referred to as the "Arista" side or "Fieldgate" side. Many of us are aware of the geographical split that exists in Block 32 West because of the pond and the forest, however, by building this overpass, it will undoubtedly separate the community in a very distinct and uncharacteristic way. Rather than trying to promote a greater sense of community between neighborhoods, **we ask council *not to separate but rather help to unite this community of ours that we call home.***

3. **SAFETY:** The issue of "safety" within our community has been and will remain at the forefront of each and every single homeowner in this block. Vellore Woods is a "unique" and quite "distinct" neighborhood. Because of our geographical location, this neighborhood will become an attractive haven to motorists trying to avoid congestion on regional and arterial roads. We are too close to Hwy 400: we already know that, and have had to learn to live with this fact, despite being told by various developers that the proximity would not be a burden in our neighborhood! With the opening up of Vellore Woods Blvd from Rutherford to Major Mackenzie, the road will allow frustrated travelers to use our neighborhood as a "short-cut" (north-south): partnered with the proposal of an overpass which will see Ashberry Blvd extended over Hwy 400 to Jane street (east-west) clearly spells disaster in our own backyards. The proposed overpass is directly adjacent to the main neighborhood park and will cross Vellore Woods which will be home to 2 elementary schools within less than 1 km of each other. Two other parks are planned directly on Ashberry Blvd and just north of this overpass. How safe is an overpass which will be built over a pond where walking trails exist and children playing. Picture this ridiculous scenario and ask yourself how this overpass was even allowed to remain in the Official Plan. It is a preposterous plan that will put a dagger in the heart of our community.

4. **HOUSE FRONTAGE:** One of the biggest frustrations that homeowners have faced in this community even before purchasing has been the blatant lies we have heard throughout our experience with sales and some city staff regarding this overpass. The old saying of "buyer beware" can be thrown at us, but what about those buyers who were aware of this proposed overpass but were reassured that "it was simply an old overpass which was left over when this area was originally designated industrial." These are the kinds of answers we got: this was the type of false information we received all in the name of making a buck! There are many houses which front on to this overpass. Given the fact that these homes are not deep set, and will in fact front very close to the road also spells potential disaster. **The Vellore Woods Ratepayers Association strongly believe that it is essential that new home buyers be advised of the classification of their street and be told of the implications of that classification in terms of future traffic volumes and transit service.** This overpass will connect neighboring communities from Pinevalley to Jane street, with all types of vehicles driving

right by someone's home where children will not be allowed to play on their own property for fear of being injured. We will in essence restrict our children to their own backyards leaving them like a caged animal unable to free itself.

5. POLLUTION: NOISE/VISUAL/ ECOLOGICAL/LOITERING

- **NOISE:** With traffic infiltration comes an increase of noise. That is a fact. Once again because of our close proximity to Hwy 400, we already battle on a daily basis with noise pollution coming from Hwy 400. The proposed overpass will significantly increase noise in our neighborhood where homes, parks, and ponds directly face the road.
 - **VISUAL:** It would be ludicrous to suggest that this overpass would, at the very least, not be an eye soar in our community. There is certainly a juxtaposed scenario here: a community park with a quaint pond with a big concrete overpass directly over the pond!
 - **ECOLOGICAL:** There are very serious ecological concerns regarding this proposed overpass. What are the long-term effects of the existing ecosystem and the ramifications of daily pollution created by motor vehicles? What will be the long-term effect on our *protected woodlot* and it's habitat?
 - **LOITERING:** The City of Vaughan has consistently voiced it's concerns regarding loitering. The construction of an overpass over a pond and next to a neighborhood park will inevitably attract loitering. Our community will have to deal with graffiti, and potential dangers. In fact, one of the main reasons the City removed a log cabin in our forest was because of the serious potential dangers of loitering. Removing the cabin and building an overpass where visibility will be restricted is in fact a haven for loiterers.
6. **PROPERTY VALUE:** An overpass in any given community is certainly not an attraction to purchasers. If it were, than developers would no doubt use the road as a "selling feature." Instead, by building this overpass, and considering the geographical proximity to Hwy 400, our property value will certainly decrease in value. In general, the difference in price between a home next to a major road and a home on a quiet street could be substantially different.

The Vellore Woods Ratepayers Association is asking Council to seriously look at the ramifications of an overpass in our community. We ask you to put the people of Vellore Woods first. Put the safety of our community at the forefront of your planning. We ask you to use the common sense approach and *spend infrastructure money where it's needed: on arterial and regional roads*. Plan with faces of children and parents and elderly in your mind and delete the proposed overpass in Block 32 West so that the community can finally begin to enjoy the place they want to call "home".

In order to expedite this concern, we ask for a response in no later than 14 days to today.

ATTACHMENT NO. 2

ITEM #

Deputation b)

ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION

CW Feb 4/02

WESTON DOWNS RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

81 Blackburn Boulevard

Woodbridge, Ontario

L4L 7J5

905-850-1767

February 4, 2002

By Fax Transmission

Mayor and Members of Council
City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, Ontario
L6A 1T1

Dear Mayor and Members of Council:

Re: Block 32 West Overpass

The Weston Downs Ratepayers Association ("WDRA") hereby requests the City to initiate an official plan amendment to remove the Block 32 overpass from the OPA No. 600 (previously OPA No. 400). Funneling Traffic from Pine Valley Drive to Melville Avenue, through residential communities is poor community planning. Outside traffic should be encouraged to stay on regional roads and not directed through residential streets where children play, neighbours walk and residents enjoy the outdoors.

The proposed overpass is problematic in that it will interfere with Paramount Canada's Wonderland's ("PCW") existing access to Rutherford Road. If the east-west part of the PCW entrance forms part of the overpass, it will effectively cutoff PCW's existing southerly entrance road connection to Rutherford Road. Without a direct access route to Rutherford Road PCW traffic will be directed through the Block 32 residential community.

Traffic on regional roads should not be accommodated by mid-block collector roads such as Ashberry Boulevard. Traffic infiltration should not be encouraged since it will have a negative impact on the Block 32 community.

In conclusion, the emphasis must be placed on improving our regional roads by widening them on a timely basis and by not allowing additional egress and ingress on regional roads. We should not be creating new regional roads through the heart of residential communities such as Blocks 32 and 39.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours very truly,

WESTON DOWNS RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

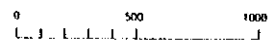
Per: *Nadia Magarelli* /RS

Nadia Magarelli
President

NM/rs

WDRA\MAYOR.L19

VELLORE URBAN VILLAGE 1



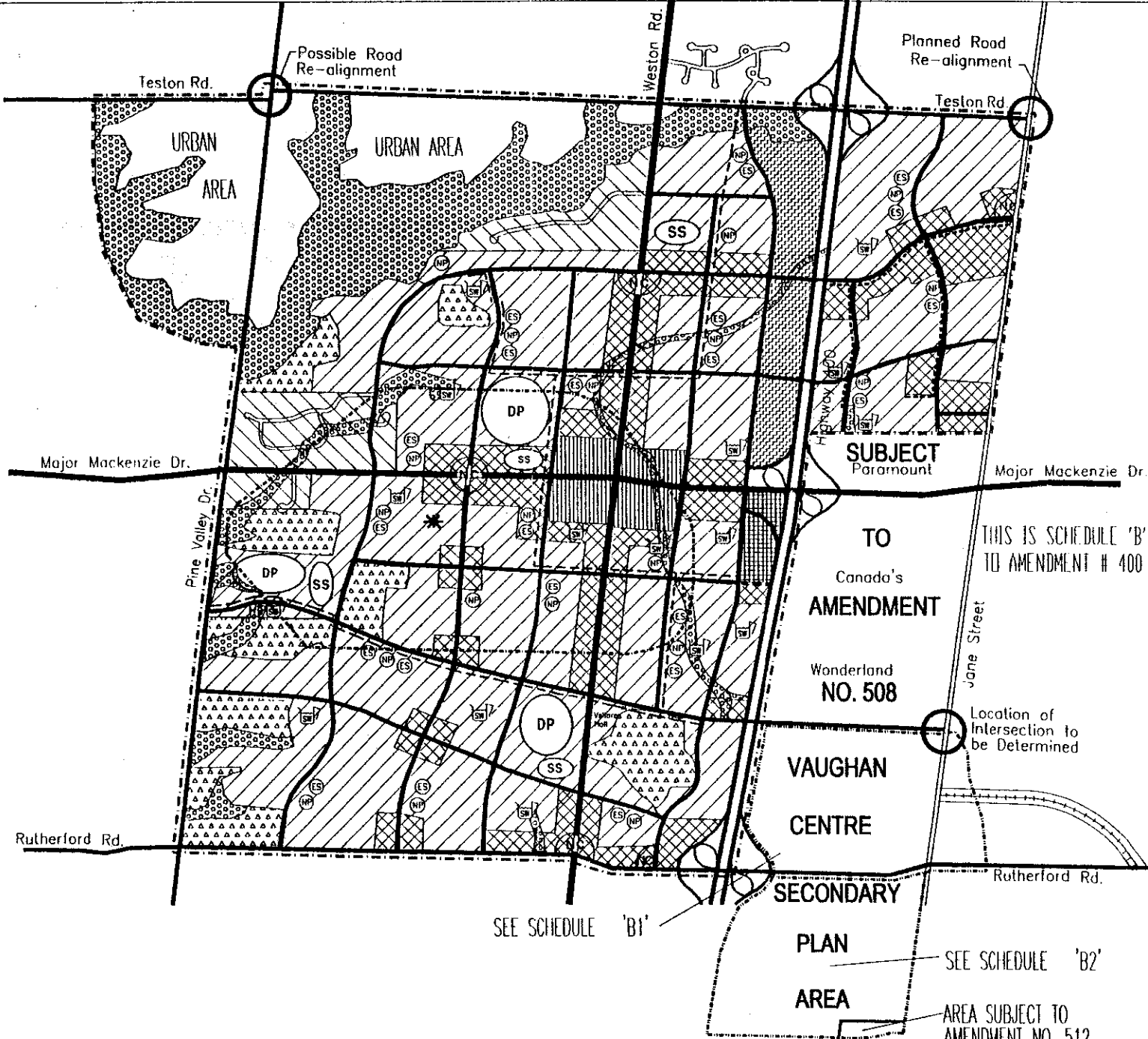
LEGEND

- (ES) Elementary School
- (SS) Secondary School
- (NP) Neighbourhood Park
- (DP) District Park
- (NC) Neighbourhood Commercial Cen
- [Pattern] Lands Subject to Vellore Urban Village Area #1
- [Pattern] Low Density Residential
- [Pattern] Medium Density Residential/Commercial
- [Pattern] District Centre
- [Pattern] Estate Residential
- [Pattern] Urban Area
- [Pattern] High Performance Employment Area
- [Pattern] Valley Lands
- [Pattern] Stream Corridor
- [Pattern] Greenway System
- [Pattern] Tableland Woodlots
- [Pattern] General Commercial
- [Pattern] Storm Water Management
- [Pattern] Vaughan Centre
- [Pattern] Waste Disposal Assessment Area (Passer Estole)

THIS IS SCHEDULE 'B' TO AMENDMENT # 600

ADOPTED THE ___ DAY OF ___, 2000

SIGNING OFFICERS
 _____ WALTER
 _____ CLERK



ATTACHMENT NO. 3