

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) APRIL 10, 2012

**STREETSCAPING PROCESS AND PROCEDURES IN CITY OF VAUGHAN
FILE 20.26**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning and Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works in collaboration with the Director of Engineering Services and Director of Parks and Forestry Operations recommends:

1. THAT the staff report and presentation on the current Streetscaping Process and Procedures in the City of Vaughan, BE RECEIVED for input and discussion.
2. THAT staff be directed to develop a sustainable approach to City-Wide Streetscapes, including a financial impact analysis and associated funding strategy, and report back to a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

Contribution to Sustainability

The City's current Streetscaping Process and Procedures contributes to the goals and objectives within "Green Directions Vaughan", the City's "Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan", specifically:

Goal 1: To significantly reduce our use of natural resources and the amount of waste we generate.

Objective 1.3 "To support enhanced standards of stormwater management at the City and work with others to care for Vaughan's watersheds"

Goal 2: To ensure sustainable development and redevelopment.

Objective 2.2 "To develop Vaughan as a City with maximum greenspace and an urban form that supports our expected population growth"

Goal 3: To ensure that getting around in Vaughan is easy and has a low environmental impact.

Objective 3.1 "To develop and sustain a network of sidewalks, paths and trails that supports all modes of non-vehicular transportation"

Goal 4: To create a vibrant community for citizens, businesses and visitors.

Objective 4.1 "To foster a city with strong social cohesion, an engaging arts scene, and a clear sense of its culture and heritage"

Objective 4.2 "To ensure that the City of Vaughan attracts businesses and investment that will result in well-paying jobs for Vaughan citizens, a sustainable tax base, and continuing prosperity into the 21st century"

Goal 5: To be a leader on sustainability issues.

The current City streetscaping process and procedures promotes the following goals, which directly relate to those of *Green Directions Vaughan*, specifically:

- Communicate a streetscape and open space framework that is both resilient and adaptable to support short, medium and long term urban transformations;

- Integrate transit infrastructure with the emerging urban fabric;
- Support the pedestrian, cyclist, transit and motorist experience for all ages and abilities;
- Define catalytic public realm design strategies and tactics that will promote cultural, social, commercial and recreational activities within the urban core, and enhance overall quality of life; and,
- Identify opportunities and implementation strategies to incorporate public art into the public realm.

Economic Impact

There are no immediate budgetary impacts resulting from this report and presentation. However, the implementation of streetscape plans can create a significant financial impact recognizing current revenue sources. Overall, the capital expenditure required to fully implement current streetscaping plans exceeds \$35 million with operating costs unknown. The City of Vaughan currently, does not have a long term financial strategy to support the additional operating and capital funding, which will be required in future years to successfully implement and maintain the higher streetscape service levels associated with the streetscape plans in the City of Vaughan's planned intensification areas.

Council endorsed Streetscape Plans, if in place, can help to leverage capital investments from the private sector through conditions of development approval, and other levels of government, which would result in a reduction in the City's capital financial impact. However, this does not address the substantial amount of long term operational and capital funding required from City financial resources to fully implement and maintain the streetscape vision endorsed by Council. Staff will be referencing the existing City streetscaping process and procedures including the funding issues and implementation opportunities, in a new City-Wide Streetscape Manual, and will report back to a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

Communications Plan

Currently, the Development Planning Department posts an electronic version of any Council approved Streetscape Plan Study on the Development Planning Department page of the City of Vaughan web-site. Public meetings are typically scheduled as part of the public consultation program in accordance with the Terms of Reference for each streetscape plan study. This will allow future development proponents to reference this guiding document, prior to submission of a development proposal.

Once staff develops the new City-Wide Streetscape Manual, as discussed later in this report, and it is approved by Vaughan Council, this document will be placed on the City's web-site, and provided to design consultants as an urban design reference tool as they proceed to undertake their work to design and improve the existing and future urban street network for planned intensification areas, including Main Streets.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's direction originating from the adoption of Item 11, Report No. 1 of the Finance and Administration Committee Meeting held on January 16, 2012 with respect to Streetscaping, to address the issues raised regarding financial impacts and timing for implementation, and to seek Council direction to proceed with the development of a City Wide Streetscape Manual that better reflects financial considerations and implementation opportunities involving potential funding partners.

Background - Analysis and Options

A staff report on the "Draft 2012 Budget, The Islington Avenue Streetscape Phasing Options and Additional Sources of Funding" was presented to the Finance and Administration Committee Meeting of January 16, 2012 (Item 11, Report No. 1). This report was subsequently adopted by Council on January 31, 2012, thereby providing the following direction to staff:

"That staff provide a report on the subject of streetscaping to a future Committee of the Whole (Working Session)."

Accordingly, this report and associated presentation has been prepared in response to this direction.

Funding and Implementation Considerations

The long term planning for streetscaping is necessary to ensure an understanding of the future financial commitments required, as well as, develop strategies that can address future funding requirements for the maintenance, operation, rehabilitation and replacement of this infrastructure. At present a number of streetscape plans have been prepared across the City. These plans and their estimated capital costs will be shown in a table format as part of the presentation to accompany this report at the Committee meeting. The determination of the life cycle costing of streetscaping infrastructure is essential to appropriately prepare budget forecasts. Comprehensive long-term financial plans need to be in place for such infrastructure in order to facilitate a proper decision making process for proceeding with the planning, design, construction and maintenance of these initiatives.

A life cycle cost analysis will provide an understanding of the cost trends over the life of this infrastructure. Life cycle costing can be categorized under two cost areas, acquisition/construction and ownership costs. Generally, it is found that the overall life cycle costs are distributed evenly over these two cost areas. In municipal infrastructure, the acquisition/construction and ownership cost areas can be described as follows:

- **Acquisition/Construction costs** – costs associated with the planning/design and installation/construction of municipal infrastructure. These costs are typically associated with 50% of the life cycle costs and will include land purchase costs (if applicable), design fees and construction costs.
- **Ownership costs** – costs associated with the operation, maintenance, rehabilitation and decommissioning of municipal infrastructure. These costs are typically associated with 50% of the life cycle costs and will include energy costs, preventative maintenance expenses, inspection costs, rehabilitation costs and decommissioning costs.

The acquisition/construction costs of current streetscaping initiative are funded through a variety of sources, such as:

- Development Charges
- Taxation
- Conditions of development approval
- Region of York cost sharing initiatives (Municipal Streetscaping Partnership Program, MSPP)
- BIA funding opportunities

There has been recognition through discussions on the Islington Avenue Streetscape project that other sources of revenue beyond tax must be pursued to implement these plans. In addition, the operation and maintenance costs are currently absorbed within the Parks and Forestry/Public Works operating budgets. With an increase in streetscaping projects proposed throughout the City, it is imperative that a funding strategy is developed to ensure the long term financial

sustainability of this infrastructure. The development of a streetscaping reserve can aid in reducing the funding gap for the construction and maintenance of these initiatives while ensuring the long term viability of these treatments. The timing of implementation and the level of service will need to be revisited as part of any long-term strategy, and in the development of upcoming streetscaping initiatives.

Operational and Maintenance Considerations

As the City of Vaughan embraces new and enhanced landscapes on the existing streetscapes, soft-scape such as trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials are utilized where possible to sustain the life span and reduce additional replacement costs. Notwithstanding this is the goal, on these high profile new landscapes, materials are introduced which significantly raises the annual operations costs. Sustainable material such as drought and salt resistant plants are used and when possible enhanced drainage and irrigation techniques to reduce frequent watering visits. Although sustainable techniques are used to reduce watering, the planting beds require scheduled cultivation, weeding, pruning and mulching to ensure the locations reach their potential. In addition to soft-scape on the streetscapes, enhanced benches and debris cans may be included that require maintenance throughout their lifespan. These elaborate displays coupled with the additional locations exceed the existing standards and therefore funding must reflect this level of service.

Similar cost issues are encountered if changes to materials used for road construction are recommended, and/or designs are recommended that are not the current City's standard. For example, the methods and costs of repairing damage to impressed concrete roads or pedestrian crossings, which are considerably different than making a repair to a "standard" asphalt road. Designs that use rain water and snow melt water harvesting for plant irrigation may incur higher annual operating costs than maintaining traditional drainage swales or piped infrastructure.

Where it was once common to install more aesthetically pleasing street lights as part of a streetscape plan, designers are now also recommending separate pedestrian lighting systems be installed. Such additional lighting systems not only increase the City's annual operating costs, they also increase the City's future capital requirements for replacing such systems at their end of life. Accordingly, appropriate funding for the ongoing maintenance and replacement of the City's infrastructure must be considered when looking at and approving streetscape designs.

Why We Do Streetscaping

Streetscapes are an important component of the public realm (public spaces where people interact), which help defines a community's aesthetic quality, identity, economic activity, health, social cohesion and opportunity. Streetscapes can have a significant effect on how people perceive and interact with their community. If streetscapes are safe and inviting to pedestrians, people are more likely to walk, which can help reduce automobile traffic, improve public health, stimulate local economic activity, and attract residents and visitors to a community. A streetscape is made up of paving, lighting, trees, street furniture, transit shelters, signage, public art and sidewalks, framed by buildings and open spaces, which combine to form an overall vibrant high-quality public realm.

The Planning Act was amended through the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act (Bill 51), 2006. The amendments provided municipalities with new authority for site plan control related to Urban Design, Landscape Architecture and Sustainable Design Control. In addition, the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and Growth Plan (2006) direct a significant proportion of growth (intensification) to Vaughan (VMC), and other intensification corridors and Mobility Hubs. Given this emphasis on intensification, redevelopment and compact urban form, Urban Design policies and guidelines, and Streetscape Plans are necessary to guide development.

The City of Vaughan's new Official Plan provides Urban Design policies to promote a high standard of urban design, including the use of Streetscape Plan studies, as a key factor in establishing attractive, pedestrian scale, transit oriented and high quality design for the public and private realm.

Building a great City means bringing together in a functional, attractive and sustainable manner, the various components that create the urban fabric. The public streets and rights-of-ways are considered significant public spaces, and therefore, their streetscape design sets the stage for development, and should balance their multiple roles and functions by ensuring that they:

- a. accommodate a variety of transportation functions, including walking, cycling, public transit and vehicles;
- b. accommodate municipal infrastructure and utilities to the greatest extent possible, which should be provided below grade;
- c. inform streetscape conditions, standards and criteria required for development approval;
- d. contribute to the greening of Vaughan through the provision of street trees and landscaping;
- e. contribute to the City's overall vibrant streetscape design, through high-quality hard and soft landscape treatments, and the integration of public art;
- f. create a pedestrian oriented urban environment by providing amenities such as wide planted boulevards with appropriate and attractive street furniture and pedestrian scale street lighting; and,
- g. capitalize on potential future implementation funding opportunities by developing cost effective "shovel ready" realistic construction cost estimates.

Current City Streetscaping Process and Procedures

The City currently initiates streetscape plan studies developed for our planned urban intensification areas, established heritage districts, historically significant areas, and the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC), which is a Provincially designated Urban Growth Centre, and envisioned to become Vaughan's downtown – the highest density node within the City. These streetscape plans are one component in a series of complimentary reports prepared for each Secondary Plan Study area, and are read in conjunction with urban design and streetscape policies outlined in the approved Secondary Plan.

The Streetscape Plan Study is a very important implementation document that will provide the vision, layout and detailed design of private and public streetscape spaces, pedestrian and bicycle connections, as well as a streetscape framework that complements built form for building placement, massing, and heights in relation to the public realm within the urban fabric.

The Streetscape Plan Study is generally organized into the following components:

1. Streetscape Design Strategy – Outlines Character Areas, associated streetscape types, and develops a framework through the public consultation process, which provides a basis for recommendations.
2. Streetscape Typologies – Categorizes streetscape types and intersection hierarchy, providing specific consistent treatment recommendations.

3. Streetscape Elements – Provides a detailed overview of recommended hard and soft landscape elements that comprise the development of the streetscape network. Included within this overview is a comprehensive matrix of recommended streetscape elements such as street furnishings, signage, planting, paving, and stormwater management control.
4. Concept Plan – The detailed overall concept plan including sections will graphically demonstrate a complete view of the recommended streetscape improvements, and how they all integrate into a vibrant high-quality public realm.
5. Implementation Funding Strategy – A detailed cost estimate, phasing, and funding strategy is prepared based on the overall concept plan, allowing City staff the ability to determine funding strategies that may include Development Charges, Region of York cost sharing initiatives, BIA funding opportunities, and a large component funded through conditions of development approval.
6. Annual Maintenance Cost analysis - This annual maintenance cost analysis will be used as input into the decision-making process for City Council and staff with respect to appropriate detailed streetscape design, and provide the necessary annual maintenance cost, and life cycle replacement cost for use by staff to budget for future resources. Operational costs are based on the first five years and do include replacement of furnishings based on future budget requests.

Public Art Strategy

Public art is an important element in all great urban streetscapes, and a future Public Art Program will need to be established starting with intensification areas such as the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, which will:

- a. identify key sites and opportunities for public art throughout Vaughan;
- b. require the inclusion of public art in all new public sector developments;
- c. establish partnerships with utility providers to integrate public art with utility infrastructure;
- d. establish partnerships with local schools, institutions and community groups to initiate neighbourhood – based public art projects; and
- e. establish a public art contribution from private development and through conditions of development approval.

City-Wide Streetscape Manual

Should Council concur with Recommendation #2 of this report, respecting a sustainable approach to City-Wide Streetscapes, a manual will be prepared by the Development Planning Department (Urban Design Division), in consultation with Finance, Legal and other relevant City Departments and external public agencies, and brought forward for consideration to a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

The City-Wide Streetscape Manual would be used as an urban design reference tool for the design and improvement of the existing and future urban street network for our planned intensification areas, including the Main Streets that define and connect our communities. The Streetscape Manual would focus on design quality in the public right-of-way, with an emphasis on coherence, beauty, durability, accessibility, pedestrian amenity, and sustainability.

Following a hierarchy of streetscape typology, the City-Wide Streetscape Manual would assign a set of standard or specialized design treatments to each street classification. The design treatments specified in the Manual would centre on streetscape elements such as; paving, street trees, medians, lighting, signage, street furniture and public art. When applied over time, these design treatments will enhance the appearance, health and enjoyment of the urban landscape.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities set forth in Vaughan Vision 2020 Strategic plan, through the following initiatives, specifically:

Service Excellence:

- Lead & Promote Environmental Sustainability
- Preserve our Heritage & Support Diversity, Arts & Culture

Organizational Excellence:

- Manage Corporate Assets
- Ensure Financial Sustainability
- Manage Growth & Economic Well-being

Regional Implications

The Region of York is a vital stakeholder in the process, and has participated in all City of Vaughan initiated streetscape plan studies completed to date. Each of these studies supports key elements of the Region of York Official Plan, adopted by Regional Council on December 16, 2009. Specifically, the implementation of the plan's following objectives stated in Section 7.2, Moving People and Goods:

"To ensure streets support all modes of transportation including walking, cycling, transit, automobile use, and the efficient movement of goods."

"To plan and protect future urban and rural streets to accommodate transportation demands."

Conclusion

As directed by Council, staff has collaboratively prepared this report on Streetscaping, which provides a detailed overview of our current Streetscape Study process, discusses financial considerations and revenue sources and procedures, City operational and capital funding implications, and recommends a Streetscape Manual be developed for consideration at a future Committee of the Whole meeting. A key consideration in developing the manual and preparing future plans will be recognizing community and City building objectives, and the fiscal constraints affecting levels of service and implementation. This initiative demonstrates the City's commitment on building a great City in a functional, attractive and sustainable manner.

Attachments

N/A

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