

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE JUNE 17, 2002

**CORRIDOR AND EMPLOYMENT AREA DESIGN STANDARDS STUDY
CITY OF VAUGHAN**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

THAT the item entitled "Corridor and Employment Area Design Standards Study – a draft Terms of Reference" prepared by the Urban Design Department, BE APPROVED.

THAT Staff be directed to extend the scope of the Regional Road 7 Study and to retain the firm "The Planning Partnership," at an upset cost of \$55,000.00 from the Department of Urban Design and Department of Community Planning operating budgets, to conduct the Corridor and Employment Area Design Standards Study on the basis of the attached Terms of Reference.

That staff report back to Council on the findings of the Study and make recommendations concerning planning policy and implementation of design standards.

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed study is to identify opportunities and current issues respecting the form of corridor and employment area development in the City of Vaughan, and also, to establish new priorities, guiding principles, and urban design objectives that can be applied to these land uses on a consistent, City-wide basis.

Corridors have the potential to link regional and urban centers by efficient transit services, and encourage more intensive mixed-use development and densities that would make frequent transit service possible. Corridors also support pedestrian, bicycle and automobile transportation and have the potential to generate significant economic development activity and area vibrancy. The character of corridors can also vary along their length, connecting compact mixed-use centers, employment and business areas with historical districts and new main streets.

Employment areas have the potential for transit-supportive urban design, fostering a safe and convenient working environment. The purpose of employment areas portion is to establish the main focus for business and industrial development and to place it in the context of the City's overall urban structure and local economy.

The public gains impressions of the City of Vaughan and York Region when experiencing these important aspects of the urban environment. Therefore, it is important to ensure that corridor and employment area development evolves within the highest design standards possible.

The study will be founded on, and carried out, in accordance with the following objectives:

- a. To address the opportunities brought forward by the development community regarding the inconsistencies in the City's planning documents as it relates to land use (OP designation and Zoning requirements) and development standards.
- b. To develop a comprehensive understanding of the current character and function of commercial and industrial development from a planning and urban design perspective throughout the City of Vaughan.
- c. To take into account the need to serve a variety of residential, commercial and industrial land uses, including their relationship to existing and future pedestrian circulation, roads, transportation, public works and transit networks.
- d. To ensure that existing land use, urban design and parking policy, along with emerging transit and transportation plans are compatible and mutually supportive at all levels.

- e. To identify urban design measures, in the public and private realm, which will benefit and assist in the evolution of a comprehensive and co-ordinated treatment of industrial and commercial development throughout the City of Vaughan.
- f. To prepare urban design standards that promote a strong sense of community and which provide a context for fostering incremental investment and development.
- g. To explore the potential for encouraging a range of mixed commercial/residential and employment uses.
- h. To identify the appropriate means of implementing the vision and develop detailed policies for inclusion in the Zoning By-law and Official Plan documents, and to provide urban design guidelines or such measures as may be identified in the study.
- i. To involve members of the development community, key stakeholders, other City departments and the public in a consultation process facilitated by a visioning exercise and design workshops.

Background - Analysis and Options

Background

Representatives from the commercial and industrial development sector met with City staff and have expressed support of the proposed Corridor and Employment Area Study. Specifically, the developers would like the City's planning and design documents to be consistent with development standards as a basis for the land use applications (OP designation and Zoning requirements) to assist in a more efficient development review process, as well as to provide a clear policy framework within which to develop.

Moreover, the opportunities offered by the prospect of higher order transit in the City of Vaughan and the municipality's current state of development, all reinforce the need to ensure that land use policies and design standards for corridor and employment area development are forward looking. Thus, the study provides an important opportunity to explore innovative land use and development solutions that may not be attainable under current conditions.

On October 15 2001, Council adopted the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole to retain the firm The Planning Partnership to conduct the Regional Road #7 (Highway 7) policy review. The purpose of the study is to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of planning and development opportunities along the entire length of Regional Road #7 in Vaughan, and to prepare an 'action plan' that will identify and address the current impediments to redevelopment in the Jane Street/Regional Road #7 Employment Area.

The work undertaken in various background studies related to the Regional Road #7 (Highway 7) policy review provides important principles and a useful framework upon which the proposed study could be built. Specifically, through the Regional Road # 7 Land Use Futures Study (Phase 1 Report) and the Jane Street/Regional Road # 7 Employment Area Redevelopment Study (Phase 1 Report), the Planning Partnership has compiled significant data on the following:

- characteristics of land use and frontage;
- existing land uses, including location and the number of businesses;
- existing official plan policies and zoning by-law requirements;
- industrial and employment area market analysis; and,
- economic and financial requirements for development and redevelopment.

Generally, the Highway #7 Land Use Futures Study focuses on higher-order transit facilities, with compatible land uses and corresponding urban design guidelines. Similarly, the Jane Street/Regional Road # 7 Employment Area Redevelopment Study focuses on high-order transit facilities, including a mix of supportive high density land uses and corresponding urban design guidelines.

The Corridor and Employment Area Design Standards Study (the “Study”) will review the following:

- aspects of site planning and organization;
- massing and conceptual design of buildings;
- the relationship of buildings to adjacent buildings, streets, and exterior areas;
- pedestrian circulation and relationships to public transit;
- street right-of-way design standards;
- landscaping; and
- parking provision and configuration.

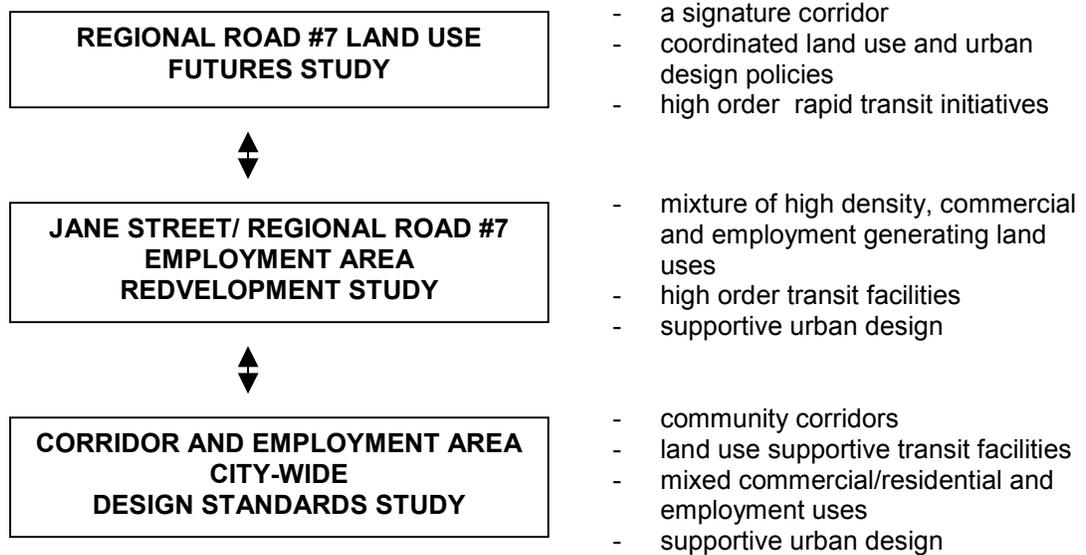
The Study will also review design aspects associated with site plans, which will include but not be limited to location of storefronts and building entrances, garage and loading bay entrances; utility location; garbage storage and collection; and fire routes (see draft Terms of Reference Schedule 'A').

The second phase of the Regional Road 7 Study will benefit from the in-depth analysis of various design typologies and standards to be explored through the design workshop process of the proposed study. Similarly, the initial phase of this Study will benefit from the in-depth analysis of higher order commercial and employment area land uses and the supporting transit services.

In light of the above, there are fundamental principles and objectives shared between the Highway 7 studies currently underway and the one being proposed by this report; a hierarchy of land uses, design standards, and transportation policies are created through the mutual inclusiveness of these studies, as outlined in Figure 1.0.

As such, by undertaking this study, comprehensive coverage of the City’s urban arterials and corridors can be achieved based on their hierarchial function.

Figure 1.0



To provide consistency with the shared links, objectives, and the general direction of the ongoing studies, staff are recommending that the Planning Partnership be selected to undertake the proposed Corridor and Employment Area Design Standards Study in accordance with the goals, objectives and work program outlined in the draft Terms of Reference (attached as Schedule 'A').

Official Plans

The City's Official Plans encourage the principles of sound planning and urban design by recognizing the need to provide for attractive streetscapes through attention to the design of the private and public realms. The policies, therefore, support aesthetically pleasing, economically viable, safe, sustainable, and environmentally-sound developments.

The following is a summary of such policy statements as found in the City and Regional Official Plans:

- OPA #600 encourages mixed use developments, including residential, retail, office and recreational uses, in the Vaughan Centre and Vaughan Corporate Centre, and pedestrian traffic, characterized by distinctive building forms, in the shopping districts;
- OPA #350 (Maple Community Plan) promotes redevelopment in the Maple Commercial Core Area, providing for new pedestrian linkages which are to be finished with landscaping and amenities for pedestrian traffic, avoiding conflict with vehicular traffic;
- OPA #240 (Woodbridge Community Plan) encourages comprehensive plans for commercial development, including incorporating an overall design to achieve proper access, internal traffic circulation, adequate parking and appropriate urban design characteristics;
- OPA #601 (Kleinburg-Nashville Community Plan) provides specific policies to address community edges, gateways, community corridors, streetscapes and building entrances, compatibility, views, vistas, and focal points, pedestrian environment, architectural design, and parking and service areas;
- OPA #210 (Thornhill-Vaughan Community Plan) encourages architectural elements for commercial developments to reduce the visual impact of the automobile, encourages connections for common rear lot laneways and parking areas, and promotes pedestrian systems and linkages between commercial sites;
- York Region's Official Plan encourages community building by requiring comprehensive secondary plans by way of area municipal official plan amendments for new areas of development, promoting community design around focal points, a mix of uses to improve the possibilities for working and living in close proximity; a system of walkways and bicycle paths; community design to encourage public access and safety; and, road systems that link with the regional road system; and,
- OPA #450 (Employment Area Growth and Management Plan) provides for co-ordinated land use, transportation infrastructure and urban design in a mutually complimentary manner, supporting and encouraging pedestrian and transit friendly development, and to provide attractive streetscapes through attention to the design of the public realm, built form, and the relationship between private development and public areas.

The policies, as outlined above, support the need for a comprehensive understanding and implementation of urban design standards for corridor and employment area developments.

Zoning Regulations

In order to implement the results of the Study, to maintain conformity with the policies in the City's Official Plans, to provide consistency across the City's planning documents, and to ensure timely approval of development applications, amendments to the Commercial and Employment Area

zone standards in By-law 1-88 may be required. In view of this, a Public Hearing regarding the above could be scheduled early in 2003.

The Recommended Consultant

In light of the ongoing work undertaken by the Planning Partnership on the Regional Road 7 studies, City Staff are recommending that the Planning Partnership be sole sourced and retained to conduct the Corridor and Employment Area Design Standards Study. Reporting to the Director of Urban Design and Director of Community Planning, the Planning Partnership will be required to undertake the tasks and work program outlined in the Terms of Reference (see attached Schedule "A").

The proposed work program is based on a collaborative and highly consultative approach, whereby stakeholders and the public will participate in a visioning exercise and design workshops led by the consultant and City Staff to ensure that the goals and objectives of the study are realistic, market-tested and implementable.

A draft Terms of Reference (see attached Schedule "A") was circulated for review and comment to a number of key commercial and industrial developers in the City.

Conclusion

An underlying objective of the Corridor and Employment Area Design Standards Study is to create a strong community image for the City of Vaughan by enhancing the character of the built environment, open spaces and the public realm. In keeping with this objective, the Study will review the current standards for corridor and employment area development and subsequently identify new priorities, guiding principles and urban design objectives that can be applied to these uses on a consistent, City-wide basis.

As such, the study provides an important opportunity to explore innovative land use and development solutions with key stakeholders and to satisfy the commercial and industrial development community respecting the consistent review of land use applications (OP designation and Zoning requirements), increased efficiencies in the development review process, and provision for a level playing field and clear policy framework within which to develop.

The Planning Partnership is recommended to undertake this Study on behalf of the City, as an extension of their current contract related to the Regional Road 7 Study.

Should Council concur, the Recommendation in this report can be adopted.

Attachments

1. Terms of Reference - Corridor and Employment Area Design Standards Study

Report prepared by:

Jason Sheldon, Planner, ext. 8320
Steven Bell, Urban Design Project Coordinator, ext. 8661
Marco Ramunno, Manager, Development Planning, ext. 8485

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL DeANGELIS
Commissioner of Planning

DIANA BIRCHALL
Director of Urban Design
/LG

JOANNE R. ARBOUR
Director of Community Planning

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SCHEDULE 'A'

CORRIDOR AND EMPLOYMENT AREA DESIGN STANDARDS STUDY **DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1.0 PURPOSE

To identify challenges and current issues respecting the form of corridor and employment area urban development in the City of Vaughan and to establish new priorities, guiding principles, and urban design objectives that can be applied to such development on a consistent, City-wide basis.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- a. To address the opportunities raised by the development community regarding the consistency of the City's approval documents with land use (OP designation and Zoning requirements) and development standards.
- b. To develop a comprehensive understanding of the current character and function of corridor and employment area development from a planning and urban design perspective throughout the City of Vaughan;
- c. To take into account the need to serve a variety of corridor and employment area land uses, including their relationship to existing and future pedestrian circulation, roads, transportation, public works and transit networks;
- d. To ensure that existing land use, urban design and parking policy, along with emerging transit and transportation plans are compatible and mutually supportive at all levels;
- e. To identify urban design measures, in the public and private realm, which will benefit and assist in the evolution of a comprehensive and co-ordinated treatment of corridor and employment area development throughout the City of Vaughan;
- f. To prepare urban design standards that promote a strong sense of community and which provide a context for fostering incremental investment and development.
- g. To identify the appropriate means of implementing the vision and develop detailed policies for inclusion in the Zoning By-law and Official Plan documents and to provide urban design guidelines, or such measures as may be identified in the study; and
- h. To involve members of the development community, key stakeholders, other City departments and the public in a consultation process facilitated by a visioning exercise and design workshops.

3.0 Design Aspects & Standards To Be Reviewed

- Site planning and organization
- Massing and conceptual design of buildings
- Relationship of buildings to adjacent buildings, streets and exterior areas
- Building setbacks (front, rear and sides)
- Corner lot and mid-block designs
- Storefront and entrance location
- Pedestrian and vehicular access points and circulation

- Street right-of-way design standards and streetscaping
- Landscaping
- Parking provision, location, configuration and treatment
- Garage/loading bay locations, technical entry points, fire routes and corresponding circulation and dimensions
- Sidewalk Policy
- Utility location and treatment of day-light triangles
- Garbage storage and collection

4.0 WORK PLAN

Part (A) Start-up

1. Administration

- Establish an understanding of issues and expectations for the project.
- Confirm the objectives, agendas, dates and venues for workshops and public meetings.
- Hold an initial project kick off meeting with the public at large to introduce the project and to solicit interest in participating in the Working Group.
- Identify stakeholders groups, municipal working groups, including appropriate City departments and Regional representation.
- Compile all background information, policies, by-laws, relevant studies, mapping.

Part (B) Review and Identification of Issues

2. Workshop Session 1 - Review of Current Issues and Principles with Stakeholders

- Identify challenges and issues associated with the status quo in terms of existing land uses, current built-form and site organization typologies, architecture and urban design; areas subject to development pressure, economic constraints, environmental sensitivities, pedestrian issues and the role of existing and future public transit.
- Discuss implementation of a new commercial/industrial development pattern.
- Review example development applications in terms of the municipal approval process and developer experiences.
- Discuss future goals and objectives with the Key Stakeholders. Focus on shared values and identify themes for exploration.
- Identify common principles and a list of key issues for consideration within various scenarios as they are developed later in the project.

3. Review of Precedents (projects and places)

- Explore and document projects and places that represent positive precedents for change, including the range of suburban development forms in Vaughan and other municipalities.
- Compile Workbook No. 1 of suburban streets that exemplify built form objectives of the municipality and market viability important to the development industry.
- Explore and document the way in which different typologies develop and intensify overtime using real and theoretical examples.

4. Summation (Workbook 1)

- Develop a summary in the form of a Workbook incorporating the results of the Workshop and the various projects and places to be considered as precedents.

Part (C) Policy Review & Urban Design Guidelines

5. Workshop #2 - Program and Typologies

- Identify basic development program including desired mix of land uses, density and built form options.
- Review precedents, evaluating relative merits and refine to establish typologies that would be appropriate for application within the City of Vaughan.

6. Prepare Urban Design Guidelines

- Prepare urban design guidelines for various typologies confirmed through Workshop 2

7. Review of Planning Policies/Practices

- Review current Official Plan policies, zoning regulations and the various approval processes to identify existing policies/practices that may be either promoting or frustrating appropriate development.

Part (D) Study Conclusion

8. Workshop #3 – Identify Implementation Strategy With Stakeholders

- Discussion of urban design guidelines, current planning policies, regulations and practices and a review of the proposed implementation strategy.
- General application of the development typologies throughout Vaughan based on an understanding of market context, planned land use and adjacent transportation facilities.

9. Draft Study & Circulation to Stakeholders

- Prepare draft of the Study incorporating precedents, urban design guidelines, and results of general exercise to apply typologies across Vaughan and a detailed implementation strategy (specific recommendations for amendments to current planning policies, regulations and practices).
- Circulate the draft report to Working Group.
- Review comments from the stakeholder circulation as the basis for the preparation of the final Study.

Part (E) Implementation

10. Presentation of Draft Recommended Design Standards

- Make presentation of draft recommended urban design standards at meeting of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session);
- Incorporate comments from Committee and revise design standards;
- Make presentation of draft standards at a public meeting; and
- Revise draft design standards incorporating comments from public meeting.

11. Final Draft Report and Recommendations

- Finalize draft report and recommendations;
- Recommendations to include policy and zoning implications as appropriate;
- Attend Committee of the Whole meeting and respond to questions from Committee;
- Incorporate comments from Committee of the Whole and finalize report; and
- Make recommendations for new design standards, as well as recommending a mechanism for implementing the standards including any revision to the zoning by-law.

Part (F) - Deliverables

- 1) Recommendation with respect to urban design and zoning by-laws including the design aspects and standards outlined in Section 3.0 of the Terms of Reference.
- 2) Integrated design solution which coordinate the objectives of each discipline in a set of design standards;
- 3) The completed product of the Study will be prepared utilizing plans, cross-sections and graphics to visually illustrate the recommended design standards;
- 4) Recommendations with respect to a mechanism for implementing the new design standards including changes to the zoning by-law(s);
- 5) Effective text and graphics for all meetings, including the use of architectural sketches, photographs, analysis, 2 and 3-D digital/computer modeling and media, along with overheads where appropriate;
- 6) Final report shall be in 8-1/2 x 11" format, utilizing graphics compatible with City's computerized systems;
- 7) Fifteen (15) black and white copies of final report shall be provided to the City as well as an electronic copy of the report.

Part (H) – Timing

- 1) The study will commence July, 2002
- 2) The study is expected to be completed by December, 2002
- 3) The Consultant will be required to prepare a project schedule and establish key meeting dates, priorities and target dates for completion of various tasks.

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