

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AUGUST 18, 2003

THORNHILL CENTRE STREET STUDY **PLANNING FILE: 15.92**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

THAT the attached Terms of Reference for the Thornhill Centre Street Study be approved.

THAT Staff be directed to proceed with the process to retain a consulting team to complete the Study.

Purpose

This report presents the Terms of Reference (Attachment 1) for the Thornhill Centre Street Study. The Study will produce a policy framework establishing requirements for planning, urban design and associated infrastructure, providing the basis for future review of development proposals within the Study Area.

Background

On October 29, 2001, Council approved a retail commercial campus consisting of 18 buildings, with a total gross floor area of 19,597m², along the perimeter adjacent to Bathurst Street, Centre Street and the future Street 'C', which provides for a pedestrian-scaled and transit-friendly development. Subsequently, concern was identified that a 'big box' form of retail might be permitted by this approval, which might have associated undesirable impacts on the Town Centre and immediate commercial and residential areas.

On June 23, 2003, Council adopted a resolution directing Staff to prepare a Terms of Reference for a study of the Centre Street commercial area in Thornhill-Vaughan, between Dufferin and Bathurst Streets. Council also authorized the addition of \$150,000 to the 2003 Operating Budget for professional fees to undertake the Study, and enacted Interim Control By-law 255-2003 respecting the subject lands to allow one year in which to complete the Study.

Previously, on January 27, 2003, Council directed Staff to commence a review of the Official Plan policies applicable to the lands fronting the north side of Centre Street between Concord Road and Vaughan Boulevard, which is presently underway.

Location

The lands subject to the Interim Control By-law are identified on Attachment 2, and include much of the lands within the Thornhill Town Centre North and South, and most of the properties located along the north side of Centre Street from Bathurst Street to Dufferin Street, with the exceptions of a residential block immediately west of Concord Road, and the northeast corner of New Westminster and Centre Street where a seniors' development is proposed. The south side of Centre Street, west of the Town Centre, is comprised of residential uses, and is not subject to the land use review.

While this section of Centre Street is the main focus of the Study, the wider Thornhill-Vaughan Community provides the broader context for the planning analysis to be undertaken. It is anticipated that the selected consulting team will establish the final limits of the Study Area based on the results of their analysis.

Land Use Status

The area is generally governed by the Thornhill Community Plan – OPA #210, as well as a number of subsequently approved site-specific Official Plan amendments.

- Designations include - “Town Centre Commercial”, “General Commercial”, “Service Station”, “Low Density Residential”
- OPA #210 also identifies the southwest quadrant of Bathurst and Centre Streets as “Retail Core”.

Site Description

The Study is focused on the lands located along Centre Street, between Bathurst Street and Dufferin Street in central Thornhill-Vaughan. The area may be characterized as a mature urban area, with most properties fully developed, primarily for low density residential uses along the south side of Centre Street, and a combination of commercial and low density residential uses on the north side. Most development has occurred in the past 10-15 years, and the area has been experiencing some redevelopment of the older areas along the north side.

Properties located immediately west of Bathurst Street, north and south of Centre Street, are included in the Thornhill Town Centre. The Promenade Mall and other retail commercial development, together with several apartment buildings, are on the southwest corner. North of Centre Street, some vacant parcels remain, and a site plan application for a Wal-Mart store has been submitted. To the north of the study area, within the Town Centre North, medium and high density residential development is proposed in addition to that which has already been built.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference focus on developing an up-to-date planning and urban design policy framework to guide development and redevelopment along Centre Street in Thornhill. The existing Thornhill Community Plan (OPA #210) was approved in 1986 and considerable development has occurred since then within Thornhill, and the Centre Street corridor in particular. This Study will engage the community in a consultation process, including residents, landowners and business interests, in refining the vision for Centre Street, in light of current and future planning concerns and objectives. The Study includes land use planning, urban design, transportation and commercial market components. The resulting policy framework will provide the basis for an amendment to the Official Plan.

The work undertaken for this Study will be co-ordinated with work already initiated, pursuant to Council’s direction, for the lands fronting on the north side of Centre Street, between Concord Road and Vaughan Boulevard. To date, applications have been received to permit a seniors’ residence, business and professional offices, and a daycare.

Budget

To complete the Study, Council has approved a budget of \$150,000 as an addition to the City’s 2003 Operating Budget, inclusive of all Study and incidental costs, including GST. As the Study will not be completed by the end of 2003, it is anticipated that Council approval will be required early in 2004 to carry forward the outstanding balance of the budget to complete the Study.

Public Consultation Process

The Terms of Reference provide for a public consultation process, wherein City staff and consultants work closely with a Stakeholder Consultation Group (SCG) through a number of

working meetings focused on the full range of planning and development issues relevant to the Thornhill Centre Street Study.

The main product of this process will be a policy framework to be presented at a public Open House, followed by a Public Hearing prior to Summer, 2004.

It is anticipated that the SCG will include residents and representatives of ratepayer associations from Wards 4 and 5. The SCG will also include representation from businesses and development interests in the vicinity of Centre Street, and from the Thornhill community. The meetings of the SCG will be open to anyone wishing to attend and inform themselves of progress on the Study.

Conclusion

The Thornhill Centre Street Study will produce a policy framework to guide future development in keeping with the City's planning objectives. The proposed study process will provide ample opportunity for the resident and business community, and development interests to be directly involved in the planning process. This process should help to ensure that the final products of the Study will be completed in a timely manner, and will be supported by the Thornhill community.

The Study is expected to be completed in Spring, 2004, and proceed to a public hearing prior to Summer, 2004. Should Council concur with the attached Terms of Reference for the Thornhill Centre Street Study, Staff should be directed to initiate the Study immediately with the adoption of the Recommendation of this report.

Attachments

1. Thornhill Centre Street Study - Terms of Reference
2. Lands subject to Interim Control By-law #255-2003

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Respectfully submitted,

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ATTACHMENT NO. 1

THORNHILL CENTRE STREET STUDY **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Thornhill Centre Street Study is a multi-disciplinary planning exercise, including land use, urban design, transportation and commercial market elements. The Study process will involve local residents working together with landowners and other interest groups, in producing a policy framework to guide the development decisions within Thornhill's Centre Street corridor, between Dufferin Street and Bathurst Street.

This section of Centre Street in Thornhill has been evolving as a retail commercial focus for the surrounding community for a number of years. In 1986, the Thornhill Community Plan (OPA 210) was approved, and the Promenade Mall opened at the southwest corner of Centre Street and Bathurst Street in the Thornhill Town Centre South. Since then, additional retail development has evolved within the Town Centre South and along the north side of Centre Street, west of the Town Centre. Interest in further commercial development has been expressed in both the Town Centre South and North and the corridors.

The Thornhill Community Plan provides for a Town Centre on the west side of Bathurst Street, north and south of Centre Street. The location for the Town Centre was selected because of its central, accessible location, enabling it to fulfill the role of the commercial focus for the Thornhill-Vaughan community, strongly supported by local and regional public transit services. The Town Centre was proposed to become a mixed use area, including a major shopping centre, hotel, offices, community recreation facilities, civic park, and high density residential uses. In addition, the Plan provides for four Neighbourhood Commercial Centre sites in sub-centres to serve groups of neighbourhoods within the community, and convenience commercial centres to address local needs. The existing commercial development along Yonge Street was expected to continue, with orientation primarily to auto traffic. No commercial role for the balance of Centre Street, east and west of the Town Centre, was identified in the Plan.

The Thornhill Community Plan is now seventeen years old, and has been amended several times to accommodate site specific commercial developments along Centre Street. The changing character of development along Centre Street suggests that it is appropriate to revisit the vision within the Thornhill community, and within the Study Area in particular.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Thornhill Centre Street Study has the following objectives:

1. To provide an appropriate and up-to-date planning and urban design policy framework to guide development within the Study Area.
2. To review and update the vision, goals and objectives for development within the Study Area in particular, and its role and relationship within the Thornhill Community Plan in general.
3. To determine the potential for additional land uses and development within the Study Area, and its implications for existing development within and in the general vicinity of the Study Area.
4. To identify appropriate streetscaping measures to enhance existing and future development within the Study Area.

5. To identify appropriate improvements to the transportation infrastructure to enhance pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and auto movements to and within the Study Area.
6. To provide input into the intended review of OPA #210.

SCOPE & FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The focus of the Study is the lands within the Study Area, and particularly, their potential for new development and redevelopment. The Study will update the vision for the Study Area, and define policies to guide future development and to ensure compatibility with and connections to adjacent lands in the surrounding community. The Study will also identify suitable measures to improve the appearance, function and economic viability of the private and public realm.

The scope of the Study includes identification of current development-related issues and concerns, as well as consideration of the impacts of proposed and potential development and redevelopment within the Study Area, for existing uses within the Study Area and nearby. The successful consulting team will be responsible for defining and justifying the limits of the Study Area.

The main product of the Study will be a framework of planning and urban design policies which may become the basis for an Official Plan amendment for the Study Area, or be incorporated into an updated Thornhill Community Plan.

COMPONENTS OF THE THORNHILL CENTRE STREET STUDY

The Thornhill Centre Street Study includes the following components:

A. LAND USE PLANNING

The planning component shall include the following:

- carry out background research on the current planning and development context, including the land use structure, environmental features and constraints, land ownership, relevant City and Region planning policies, current development applications, redevelopment activity, etc., and identify existing and potential planning and development issues, conflicts and opportunities;
- conduct one or more design charettes with the Stakeholder Consultation Group (SCG) to assess the community's expectations and concerns, and to explore and articulate the desired planning and urban design vision for the Study Area. The charettes will address both the long-term objectives, as well as interim options and phasing.
- develop a comprehensive policy framework, integrating land use, urban design, transportation and other key planning elements, in a manner consistent with the vision for the Study Area.
- identify other planning initiatives to facilitate achievement of the vision (ie. amendments to secondary plan and zoning provisions, signage, streetscaping, etc.)
- prepare a comprehensive report encompassing and integrating the research, analysis and findings of all Study components.

B. URBAN DESIGN

The urban design component shall include the following:

- review and assess existing development context from an urban design perspective, vis-à-vis City planning and urban design objectives, and identify shortcomings requiring attention;
- conduct one or more design charrettes with the SCG to explore and articulate the planning and urban design vision for the Study Area. The charrettes will address both the long-term objectives, as well as interim options and phasing, if appropriate. Charette activities shall be supported by plans and 3-D computer and manual renderings, high quality visual examples, photo-manipulation techniques, and sections;
- develop urban design goals, objectives and policies suitable for inclusion in an Official Plan amendment, in support of the planning and urban design vision;
- develop a structure plan of public streets and open spaces as a framework for development;
- develop public realm guidelines addressing views, open spaces, streets, streetscaping, landscaping, pedestrian and bicycle routes, neighbourhood connections, pedestrian comfort and public transit facilities, signage treatment and utility locations;
- develop built-form guidelines addressing scale, massing and conceptual design of buildings; site planning and organization; relationship to adjacent buildings and the public realm; pedestrian and vehicular access, connections and circulation; parking and servicing location, configuration and treatment;
- prepare up to three rendered perspective drawings, illustrating the physical appearance, scale and massing of structures, and the inter-relationships of built-forms and public realm;
- prepare drawings and sketches suitable for inclusion in the Urban Design Guidelines;
- prepare a report summarizing the urban design component of the Study, including the principles, explanatory text, illustrations of the full range of spatial relationships, and recommendations.

C. MARKET AND DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

The development component shall include the following:

- review existing, proposed and potential commercial development in the Study Area, in context of the broader Thornhill-Vaughan community, and in particular, identifying retail characteristics, trends, deficiencies and problems in terms of the scale, amount, type and economic viability of Thornhill's commercial development;
- assess the adequacy of commercial development in the Core Area and Centre Street corridor to address the needs of the Thornhill's existing and future population and market area; identify infrastructure improvements and strategic

opportunities, with the potential to improve the range and choice of commercial goods and services available, and strengthen and support the commercial sector;

- develop a strategic approach to development in the Study Area, which supports the vision for the Study Area;
- identify appropriate areas and sites within the Study Area where additional commercial and/or mixed use development is desirable, or other land use and development decisions would enhance the viability of commercial uses; and
- prepare a report summarizing the commercial analysis and recommendations, including policies to complement and support development within the Study Area.

D. TRANSPORTATION

The transportation component shall include the following:

- review and develop a thorough understanding of the existing development context from a transportation planning perspective, in terms of the adequacy and function of existing transportation infrastructure, inefficiencies and planned improvements;
- review existing traffic counts on roadways at key intersections, turning movement and AADT information from York Region, Ministry of Transportation, etc.;
- forecast future background traffic volumes on area arterial roadways for the 2011, 2016 and 2026 planning horizons;
- assess the capacity of the road network to accommodate and forecast future traffic volumes, and advise on modifications to address functional and operational traffic and transit objectives;
- assess opportunities for Centre Street as a key transit corridor, including potential connections to 407 Transitway and a future Concord GO rail station, and implications for transit in the Study Area of currently ongoing Class Environmental Assessments on Highway 7 and Yonge Street;
- make recommendations on existing and future parking and access requirements, transportation infrastructure improvements, including their phased introduction, and public transit service and facility enhancements;
- prepare a report documenting the transportation component of the Study; and
- attend SCG meetings as necessary, and two public meetings, to discuss transportation issues and analytical methodology; and to provide results of the analysis.

CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC, LANDOWNERS AND PUBLIC AGENCIES

The Thornhill Centre Street Study will require a public consultation process, including the formation of a Stakeholder Consultation Group (SCG), comprised of representatives of the local community, ratepayer associations, landowners within the Study Area and public agencies; this process will entail:

1. Up to ten (10) meetings with the SCG.
2. Two (2) public information/Open House meetings to inform the public about work in progress, and receive input.
3. A statutory Public Hearing.

In addition, some working meetings with City staff and the consulting team will be required.

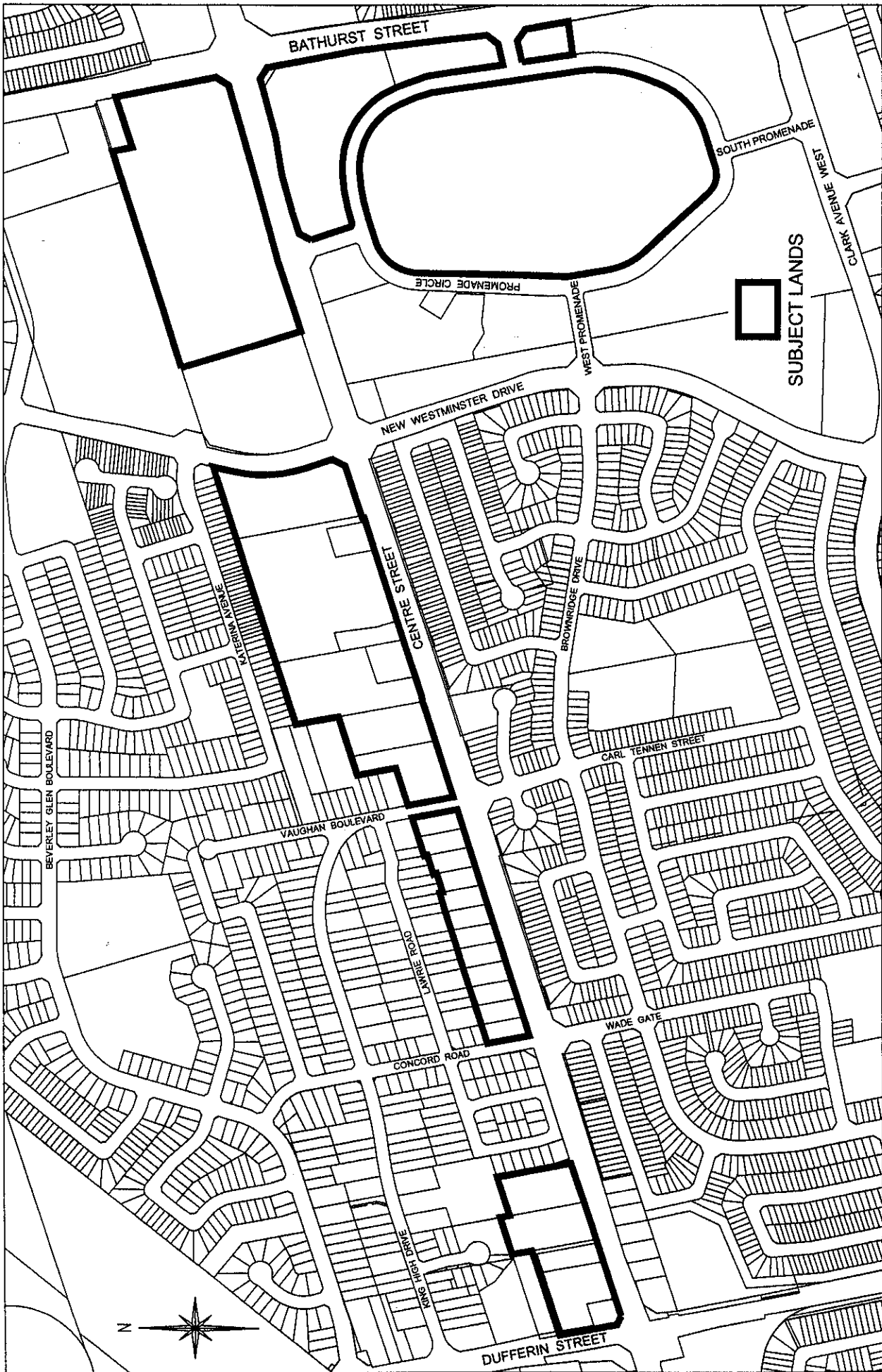
CONSULTING AND FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

The Thornhill Centre Street Study will be supervised by the City's Project Manager, under the direction of the Manager of Policy and Special Studies. A consulting team, led by a land use/urban design consultant, will carry out the study with the input and participation of City planning, urban design, economic development and engineering staff. The consulting team will include expertise in land use planning, urban design, transportation planning and retail market/economic research.

The Thornhill Centre Street Study will include planning, urban design, transportation and market sub-components. The costs of each sub-component of the Study will be individually established and itemized in the proposals for consulting services.

TIMING AND SCHEDULING OF THE STUDY

The Study is expected to require approximately nine (9) months to be completed, once the consultant has been selected and approved by Council.



Attachment 2

Not to Scale
August 13, 2003



Community Planning Department

Lands Subject to Interim Control By-Law 255-2003

Part Lots 4, 5, 6,
Concession 2

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