

BUDGET COMMITTEE MAY 7, 2007

YONGE STREET AREA STUDY (STEELES TO HWY. 407)

FILE: 15.97

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning in consultation with the Commissioner of Finance & Corporate Services recommends:

THAT an amount of \$270,000 (funded \$243,000 CWDC – Management Studies and \$27,000 taxation) be approved and included in the 2007 Capital Budget for the Policy Planning Department to undertake a study of the Yonge Street Area;

THAT Staff prepare a detailed Terms of Reference and Study Budget not exceeding the amount noted above for consideration by Council in May, 2007; and

THAT Staff initiate discussions with Town of Markham staff respecting the coordination of the Study with work being undertaken by Markham on the east side of Yonge Street.

Economic Impact

The budget requirements for this Study have not been previously accounted for in the 2007 budget process. A significant part of the Study costs would be recoverable through future development charges, provided that the Study results in policies permitting redevelopment in the Yonge Street Area.

Communications Plan

Upon Council approval of the Study Terms of Reference and consultant selection, the Study would be initiated with an Open House to which all interested stakeholders would be encouraged to attend. A Stakeholder Consultation Group would be established to provide input throughout the Study process. The process may also include community consultation and design workshops, and would conclude with a Public Hearing to consider amendments to the Official Plan. Further details of the communications and consultation approach will be defined in the Terms of Reference and consultants' workplan.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to identify an upset budget limit for the Yonge Street Area Study as part of the 2007 Capital Budget, pending preparation of Terms of Reference and a more detailed budget for Council's consideration later in May.

Background - Analysis and Options

At the Working Session of Committee of the Whole on April 24, 2007, the adopted resolution directed Staff to draft a Terms of Reference and prepare a budget estimate for a Yonge Street Corridor Study from Steeles Avenue north to Highway 407. The Study would include the lands on the west side of Yonge Street north and south of the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District. The Conservation District was recently the subject of a comprehensive land use and urban design study which concluded with the adoption of OPA 669 in June, 2006. The Study Area will be defined in the Terms of Reference.

The review and updating of policies applicable to the Yonge Street area is timely for several reasons:

1. Yonge Street is very important to Vaughan, York Region and the GTA.

Yonge Street is Vaughan's eastern boundary and a gateway. It is Canada's longest street, and one of York Region's highest priorities for higher order transit improvements.

2. Yonge Street is subject to increasing redevelopment pressure.

There are current applications for intensified development on both sides of Yonge Street. A property owner on the Vaughan side within the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District has proposed a high density mixed use residential/retail development just north of Arnold Avenue on the west side of Yonge Street. On the large Hy and Zel's site on the Markham side of Yonge Street, the landowner has proposed a major redevelopment including high density residential, commercial and mixed use development, prompting the Town of Markham to initiate a study of the east side of Yonge Street from Steeles Avenue to the Heritage Conservation District. Markham has requested Vaughan staff participation in their study.

3. Redevelopment of appropriate scale and form may be appropriate.

Given the scale of Yonge Street and its importance as a higher order transit route, it may be appropriate to permit redevelopment to higher densities in some locations, provided that the development is compatible with and sensitive to neighbouring uses, and servicing capacity and the road network can accommodate it.

4. Opportunities to revitalize and strengthen Yonge as a 'Main Street'.

The Thornhill Yonge Street Study recognized the historic role of Yonge Street as the 'Main Street' of the Thornhill community, and introduced new policies to foster its revitalization. This process may be further enhanced by supplementing the existing commercial development, and supported by an enlarged residential community north and south of the Conservation District.

A comprehensive review of the existing policy framework governing development along Yonge Street is needed to enable the City to articulate its position and provide direction respecting the preferred form of future development there. Up-to-date policies will also enable the City to respond to development applications, and ensure that the City's goals, objectives and vision for the area are likely to be achieved.

In addition, VIVA is currently working on the design of the generic streetscaping requirements for the Yonge Corridor in order to enhance the pedestrian and transit environment and thereby achieve higher levels of transit ridership. The Yonge Street Area Study should provide the opportunity to examine more detailed, site-specific streetscaping requirements beyond the VIVA work.

Given that Markham and Vaughan share an interest in the future evolution of development in the Yonge Street Area, and can benefit from a coordinated response to development pressure there, Staff proposes to consult with Markham staff prior to defining the Study Terms of Reference. The Thornhill Yonge Street Study has already demonstrated the benefits of a coordinated approach along the common municipal boundary. Efficiencies may also be achieved with respect to completing the required work and of consulting costs.

Given that Council is now finalizing the City's 2007 budget, a budget of \$270,000 is proposed in the 2007 Capital Budget, to ensure that sufficient budget is reserved to undertake the required work for the Yonge Street Area Study. The proposed funding source for this study is \$243,000

CWDC Management Studies and \$27,000 taxation. The Study Terms of Reference will be drafted and submitted for Council's consideration later in May, together with the specific budget requirements of the Study.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report is consistent with Vaughan Vision 2007, Section 3 – Transportation and Transit Infrastructure, and Section 4 – Planning and Managing Growth.

This report recommends a change from the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have not been allocated.

Regional Implications

The Yonge Street Area Study would examine the form and scale of future development on Yonge Street north and south of the Thornhill Heritage District. Yonge Street is a Regional Road where York Region is making a major investment in transit infrastructure improvements. The success of higher order transit in the Yonge Corridor is dependent in part upon the presence of transit-supportive development there.

Conclusion

A budget is proposed within the 2007 Capital Budget, pending consultation with Markham, and preparation of a detailed Terms of Reference for the Yonge Street Area Study. Staff proposes to submit a report with the Terms of Reference later in May, with a study budget not exceeding the budget identified in this report.

Should Council concur with this proposed approach, the Recommendation should be supported.

Attachments

Nil.

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Respectfully submitted,

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