

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING NOVEMBER 5, 2007**

### **THORNHILL VAUGHAN HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY FILE: 19.27**

#### **Recommendation**

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

- “1. THAT the final Study Report and Plan for the Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District (Attachment #3), BE APPROVED;
2. THAT the west side of the Yonge Street corridor from Mill Street and extending north to Thornhill Avenue, and forming part of the current Yonge Street Area Study, be reviewed under the same principles as those for the Thornhill Yonge Street Study (2005). This will ensure continuity within the Heritage District;
3. THAT the City of Vaughan Sign By-law be amended to prohibit internally illuminated signs and awnings in Heritage Conservation Districts and that notice be given pursuant to the Notice By-law; and
4. THAT a new By-law be enacted to adopt the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan (2007); and, THAT the new By-law, once enacted, be registered against title to the properties affected by the By-law in the Land Registry Office.”

#### **Economic Impact**

The funds for the Study were approved by Council on September 12, 2006. Subsection 41(10.1) and clause 41(5)(b) of the Ontario Heritage Act, as amended in 2005, now requires that a by-law that designates a Heritage Conservation District be registered against title to the properties affected by the by-law in the Land Registry Office. The cost to the City of this one time fee will be approximately \$500.00 to register all properties plus associated staff time. This work will be undertaken at such time as the implementing by-laws are adopted by Council and are in full force and effect.

#### **Communications Plan**

Property owners within the Study area were notified by direct mailings, advertisements were placed in local papers, and the Study and notification of each meeting were highlighted in the Policy Planning section of the City's website. Three public consultation meetings were held at strategic milestones in the study process. On average 25 residents and business owners attended these meetings.

On August 24, 2007, a notice of Public Hearing was sent to all residents/landowners within the study area and to a distance of 120 m outside of the study boundary, to Heritage Vaughan, the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill, and representatives of the Region of York and Town of Markham. The notice of Public Hearing was also posted in the Vaughan Citizen on August 23, 2007 and in the Vaughan Weekly on August 29, 2007. In addition, the notice was placed on the City web site on August 23, 2007.

On September 17, 2007, Council received the Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District Plan 2007; and, directed that any issues identified at the Public Hearing be addressed by the Policy Planning Department, in a comprehensive report to a future meeting of the Committee of the Whole.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to receive Council approval of the Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District Plan 2007, and to adopt the related implementation actions outlined in the recommendation section of the report.

## **Background - History**

Thornhill is one of Ontario's earliest settlements, dating from the original construction of Yonge Street shortly after 1801. Considering the District as a whole, the goals and objectives of the 1984 Plan have been largely achieved and the District has been successful in preserving its heritage resources and character, with the loss of only one heritage building in the interim.

The styles of the heritage buildings are Victorian Vernacular, Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, Foursquare / Edwardian, Arts and Crafts, and Craftsman Bungalow. Many of the more recently built houses have made an effort to reflect the heritage characteristics in the village.

## **Background - Analysis and Options**

The Study Area is the boundary of the existing Thornhill Heritage Conservation District as defined in the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Study/Plan (1984). The Plan was completed to provide a set of guidelines for development in the Old Village of Thornhill, including building design, site design and public infrastructure improvements to ensure the preservation of the existing historic buildings and unique environmental features.

Given the time which has elapsed since the 1984 Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Study/Plan, and the new policies addressing the Yonge Street portion of the heritage district contained in OPA 669, a review of the Heritage Conservation District Plan was recommended. On June 26, 2006, Council adopted the following Staff recommendation:

"With the support of appropriate consultants, City Staff should review and revise the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan (including signage and lighting policies) in co-ordination with the Town of Markham, and in accordance with the new OPA policies."

Recent revisions to the Ontario Heritage Act change the relationship between Heritage Conservation District Plans and Official Plans and zoning by-laws. Once adopted, the development policies and guidelines contained within the Heritage Conservation District Plan will supersede existing policies contained within OPA #210, and OPA #669 (Thornhill Yonge Street Official Plan); and the City's Comprehensive Zoning By-law 1-88. OPA 669 is recent and inclusive of heritage principles reflected in the proposed plan, however, By-law 1-88 should be reviewed to ensure conformity with the approved Heritage Conservation District Plan.

The Thornhill Heritage Conservation District was among the first in the province to be established. The boundary of the District, which was established by By-law No. 306-88, remains the same. The first task for the consultants in the District Plan review was the examination of the existing District Plan and other documents regulating development in the area, such as official Plans, zoning and signage by-laws.

An examination of the District was also conducted, including both a general consideration of its heritage character and assets, and a new District Inventory individually describing and depicting every property in the District. The third part of the review is the establishment of a community consultation process. The public consultation process undertaken by the Consultant and City staff with the Ward Councillor, residents, public school representatives and business owners formed an important part in identifying areas of concern that could be addressed through this Heritage Conservation District Review.

### Community Consultation

There were a total of three public consultation meetings to engage the public in the Heritage Conservation District Plan Review process. The Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan was also presented in draft form to the Heritage Vaughan Committee on May 16, 2007. The Committee received the Plan and requested that they have the opportunity to review the final draft. On June 20, 2007, Heritage Vaughan approved the final draft of the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan.

The statutory public hearing for the Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District Plan was held on September 17, 2007. The following is a summary of the comments/issues raised at the hearing:

- (i) There were several concerns raised respecting 7822 Yonge Street. This property has been severed and is now two lots; one fronting on Yonge Street (7822 Yonge Street), and the other fronting on Old Yonge Street (33 Old Yonge Street).
  - a) There were questions as to whether severances are required to be approved by the Heritage Vaughan Committee. The City of Vaughan procedure respecting Committee of Adjustment Applications is that all Committee applications falling within a Heritage Conservation District Plan are circulated to the Cultural Services Staff for their comments. At the discretion of Staff, there can also be a request for deferral of the application in order to have it reviewed by the Heritage Vaughan Committee. To date, the final decisions of the Committee of Adjustment have respected the recommendations of Cultural Services and Heritage Vaughan.
  - b) A resident at the public hearing questioned whether the owners of the 7822 Yonge Street property had obtained a Heritage permit, and building permit to begin construction on the severed lot. Policy Planning Staff were able to confirm that a heritage permit for the design of the new building was approved by Heritage Vaughan on March 21, 2007. The building permit was issued by the Building Standards Department on August 30, 2007.
  - c) Based on concerns raised at the Public Hearing respecting the cutting/damaging of trees at the 7822 Yonge Street property, Policy Planning staff requested that By-law Enforcement investigate. Subsequently, a By-law Enforcement Officer and a representative from the Parks and Forestry Department visited the site on October 10, 2007. They have advised that several trees on the property have been damaged through soil excavation and displacement. The By-law Enforcement Department will do further investigation, and take the appropriate action as per the City of Vaughan Private Property Tree Protection By-law No. 185-2007.
- (ii) A question was asked respecting the requirement for a heritage permit prior to the issuance of a demolition permit within the Heritage Conservation District. A Heritage permit is indeed required for all demolition permits within the district.
- (iii) Clarification was requested on whether or not site plan approval for a replacement building is required at the time of applying for a demolition permit. While this is not a procedural requirement, Cultural Services advises owners applying for demolition permits that it is to their benefit to provide a site plan for a replacement building. It is more difficult to obtain a demolition approval from the Heritage Vaughan Committee in the absence of a proposed site plan for the property. It is Cultural Services observation that the large majority of applicants for demolition permits, do apply concurrently for site plan approval.

### Official Plan/Zoning

The southern portion of the Study area is designated "Institutional", "Open Space/Plaza", "Mid-Rise Mixed Use", "Heritage Mainstreet", and "Low Density Residential", under OPA #669 (Thornhill/Yonge Street Official Plan). The lands are also subject to the Urban Design Policies of OPA # 669.

The northern portion of the Study Area (north of the Thornhill Golf Course), is designated "General Commercial" by OPA 462, and "Open Space", "Parkway Belt", and "Low Density Residential" by OPA 210 (Thornhill Vaughan Community Plan). The lands in this northern portion of the study area are also subject to the "Guidelines for Site Development within the Village of Thornhill Heritage Conservation District". At the time that OPA # 210 is amended, any relevant changes resulting from this Heritage Conservation District Study should amend those policies currently in OPA #210.

The Subject Lands are zoned C1, C2, and C6 Commercial Zones; OS1 Open Space Conservation, OS2 Open Space Park, and PB1 Parkway Belt Open Space Zones; R1V Single Detached Large Lot Residential, R1 Single Detached Residential, and RM2 Multiple Dwelling Residential Zones.

### Terms of Reference

The key tasks outlined in the Terms of Reference for the Heritage District Study and approved by Council on September 12, 2006 are outlined below:

1. Review the existing Thornhill Heritage District Study/Plan policies, guidelines, processes and procedures, as well as other relevant policy documentation including, but not limited to, the Markham Thornhill Heritage Conservation Study, OPA 669, the Thornhill Yonge Street Study (2005), and the Thornhill-Vaughan Community Plan –OPA 210.
2. Identify issues of concern related to the Plan, including those of the local community through public consultation meetings, including the participation of Heritage Vaughan, and the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill.
3. Consult with Heritage Vaughan and City staff from the Cultural Services Department.
4. Update the Plan consistent with the new policies of OPA 669.
5. Formulate and assess options to address deficiencies and identified areas of concern.
6. The Study was projected to be completed by the summer of 2007.

### District Policies

#### Objectives for the Heritage District Plan

The overall objective in reviewing the District Plan is to ensure the retention and conservation of the District's cultural heritage resources and heritage character, and to guide change so that it contributes to and does not detract from, the District's architectural, historical, and contextual character.

### Heritage Buildings

The objectives of the Plan for the Heritage Buildings identified in the City of Vaughan Listings of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Value, are to correct unsympathetic alterations, and facilitate restorations. Heritage buildings as identified by the City of Vaughan Listings of Buildings

of Architectural and Historic Value are to be conserved and (retained) as necessary. Relocation of a heritage building should only be employed as a last resort. Before such a building can be approved for relocation to any other site the following alternatives, in order of priority, will be investigated:

- i) Retention of the building in its original location and use;
- ii) Retention of the building on site in an adaptive reuse;
- iii) Relocation of the building to another part of the original site;
- iv) Relocation of the building to another site in the District; and,
- v) Relocation of the building to an appropriate site within the City of Vaughan.

The City, through the Ontario Heritage Act, may refuse a demolition permit or an application for relocation for either an individually designated building or a building located within the District.

#### Non-Heritage Buildings

The objective of the District Plan respecting the non-heritage buildings is to encourage retention of buildings supportive of heritage character and improvements to these buildings to enhance the District's heritage character. Alternatives and additions to non-heritage buildings in the District should be consistent with one of two design approaches:

- i) Historical conversion or contemporary alternatives; and,
- ii) A modern building should be altered in a way that respects and complements its original design.

#### New Residential Buildings on Local Streets

New residential buildings are to have respect for and be compatible with the heritage character of the District. Designs for new residential buildings should be based on the patterns and proportions of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century building stock currently found, or which had existed in the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District. The following design policies apply to new residential buildings:

- i) Design should reflect one of the historic architectural styles traditionally found in the District;
- ii) The buildings should complement the immediate physical context and streetscape by generally maintaining height, width and orientation of adjacent buildings, similar setback, and like use of materials and colours;
- iii) Larger new residential buildings will have varied massing to reflect the small and varied scale of the historical village;
- iv) The height of new residential buildings should not be less than 80% or more than 120% of the average height of the residential buildings on immediately adjacent properties. Notwithstanding this height limit, two storey houses are permitted next to one storey houses if the ground floor is no more than 1 metre above original grade; and,
- v) New residential buildings should conform to the design guidelines contained in the proposed Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan.

## New Residential or Commercial Development on Yonge Street

The proposed Heritage Conservation Plan endorses the policies of the Thornhill Yonge Street OPA 669. Official Plan Amendment No. 669 provides urban design guidelines to establish a high quality, pedestrian friendly main street environment; and promotes new mixed use development that is appropriate to the transit corridor and existing heritage resources.

The proposed Heritage Conservation District Plan supports the Heritage Mainstreet 1-3 storey heights and recommends that for consistency of scale and massing within the Heritage Conservation District, the stretch of Yonge Street north of Mill Street and extending to Thornhill Avenue, be studied under the same principles as those for the Thornhill Yonge Street Study (2005). The following design policies apply to new commercial buildings:

- i) The design of new commercial buildings will be products of their own time, but should reflect an historic architectural style either traditionally found in the district or reflect traditional commercial architecture in a typical historic Ontario downtown setting;
- ii) In the case of larger developments, design elements or techniques which reduce the actual and perceived scale should be used;
- iii) Maximum building heights approved in OPA 669 are supported. On sites where buildings over 3 storeys are permitted, the height of new buildings will include a transition of heights to respect heights of adjacent buildings;
- iv) Building heights on Yonge Street should preserve sky views of residential properties behind, based on angular planes of 45 degrees from the base of the residential buildings; and,
- v) New commercial building construction in the District will conform with the design guidelines provided in the proposed Heritage Conservation District Plan and design policies of OPA 669.

## Architectural Guidelines

The proposed Plan details architectural styles which are appropriate for the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District and provides examples of these styles through illustrations and descriptions of buildings and architectural elements. The guidelines also detail repair and renovation techniques as well as appropriate building materials which should be used to ensure authenticity.

Guidelines for historical conservation and new development are also provided with respect to architectural characteristics, building materials, scale, detail and the siting of the building on the lot.

## Landscape Treatment

The objective of the proposed heritage district plan is to facilitate introduction of, as well as conservation of, historic landscape treatments in both the public and private realm.

Landscape features and landscaping help to define the character of the District, and to provide an appropriate setting for its historic buildings. The Ontario Heritage Act includes policies to protect trees, vegetation, pathways and property features such as fences and other landscape elements that are of cultural heritage value as intended. The introduction of complementary landscapes to the heritage environment is encouraged. The following policies respecting landscape treatment are proposed in the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan:

#### A. Planting

- i) Healthy mature trees shall be preserved as required by the City of Vaughan Private Property Tree Protection By-law No. 185-2007. When considering the removal of any trees the property owner must ensure compliance with this by-law;
- ii) New trees and shrubs should be hardy, long living and suitable for their environments; and,
- iii) Planting should not obscure heritage buildings, but can frame important features. Appropriate planting can improve less attractive sites in the District.

#### B. Fences

- i) Fences will be regulated by the municipal fence by-law;
- ii) Existing historical fences will be preserved. The erection of fences of historical design is encouraged; and,
- iii) Front yard and backyard fences shall conform to the guidelines included in the proposed plan.

#### C. Driveways (Residential)

- i) Driveways shall be narrow in width to preserve the front yard;
- ii) Curvilinear driveways are not permitted;
- iii) Driveway entrances should not be gated; and,
- iv) Residential driveways shall conform to the guidelines provided in the Plan.

#### Signage

The City of Vaughan By-law 203-92 which regulates signage in the City, contains provisions (Section 11) for Special Sign Districts such as the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Area. It is noted in the proposed plan that many of the existing signs in the Heritage District contravene By-law 203-92 and that enforcement of the policies may be an issue. The following regulations apply specifically to signs within the Heritage District:

- i) Commercial signage shall generally be regulated by the municipal sign by-law;
- ii) The Thornhill Special Sign district should conform to the Heritage District Boundary; and,
- iii) Prominent signage in the District will be consistent.

The number of signs should be kept to a minimum, not block architectural features, and generally be located above the storefront or business. The Plan also recommends that the By-law be amended to include the following additional policy:

- (i) Internally illuminated signs and awning signs are prohibited in Heritage Conservation Districts.

#### Streetscaping

Work within the road allowance should be designed and executed to meet median requirements, amenity and convenience, without detriment to the heritage character of the District. Thornhill is characterized by two distinct contexts; the residential areas and the Yonge Street commercial core. The goals of the Guidelines for streetscaping are:

- i) Enhancing the historical character of the road allowance in the residential areas;
- ii) Creation of a pedestrian-friendly shopping environment in the commercial core;

- iii) Establishing identity through gateways, signage and markers; and,
- iv) Establishing attractive pedestrian connections to open spaces, institutions, residential areas, etc.

#### Guidelines for Streetscaping on Local Streets

- i) The rural profile should be preserved where it exists;
- ii) Over time, grassed boulevards should be provided where they do not already exist; and,
- iii) Maintain an informal pattern for planting with a mix of deciduous trees and shrubs.

#### Guidelines for Streetscaping on Yonge Street

The proposed Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan has included the design provisions and land use designations of recent OPA 669. It further recommends that the urban design policies and streetscape policies of OPA 669 should apply to the remainder of the Yonge Street Heritage Area currently not covered by the Official Plan where appropriate.

Creation of a pedestrian friendly commercial environment is the most important objective of streetscape work in the Commercial Core. Lighting and street furniture should be consistent, and appropriate throughout the heritage conservation area.

This effort is being co-ordinated between the City of Vaughan, the Town of Markham and York Region Transit to ensure that each aspect of the streetscape work is consistent throughout the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District, and that materials chosen for boulevard and crosswalk treatments are in keeping with the heritage character of the district.

The Plan also contains a section on appropriate planting materials and a building material checklist. The streetscaping principles highlighted in the Plan for choosing appropriate planting and building materials include:

- i) Adaptability to the automotive streetscape is important. Modern accessories like waste receptacle and street lighting should be placed near to the curb, where they form a transition band between the heritage experience of the buildings and the modern experience of the roadway;
- ii) Do not accentuate non-heritage installations; a simple modern item is less obtrusive than a deliberately "historical" version;
- iii) Maintain historical integrity;
- iv) Since Thornhill was a modest village, street furniture and lighting should be simple and functional;
- v) Utility installations such as overhead wiring, telecommunications boxes and transformers should be located so that they are not readily visible from the street. It is strongly recommended that utility wires and related infrastructure (transformers, etc.) be located below grade or within buildings in the District area. It is important that the wires be removed from the streetscape area, should they remain on the surface, they take up streetscape area which is required for tree planting, pedestrian walkway, and furnishing area and are unsightly; and,
- vi) Public signage, including directional, regulatory, identity and public information signs should be co-ordinated through-out the district to promote a co-ordinated identity. Commemorative and interpretive signs for buildings of cultural heritage



value should be co-ordinated with other directional signs and be consistent and discreet throughout.

### Land Use In The District

The proposed study recommends that the existing district land use and prevailing zoning classifications be respected, however, that zoning By-law 1-88 be reviewed to examine whether it is appropriate to develop a zoning overlay for all or part of the District to reflect the existing built form. In addition, Committee of Adjustment applications should also be examined for conformity with the provisions of the Heritage Conservation District Study.

New provisions under the District Plan propose that Site Plan Control apply to all properties within the District. The Study further recommends that more complex development proposals be designed by a design professional who is licensed by the Ontario Association of Architects and is a professional member of the Canadian Association of Professional Consultants, in consultation with Heritage Vaughan, and the Cultural Services and Planning Development Departments.

### Community Support

An underlying goal of the proposed heritage district plan is to foster community support, pride and appreciation of the heritage buildings and to offer assistance and incentives to heritage property owners to encourage the use of proper conservation approaches. It is also understood that the business owners must maintain a competitive business environment in the commercial core and therefore the district plan recommends that financial incentives such as tax measures, grants and loans, and financial aids through community improvement plans be considered.

Recent provincial legislation allows municipalities to enact property tax abatement for properties designated under Part 1V and V of the Heritage Act. Grants and loans are often very effective in encouraging proper repair and restoration of heritage attributes.

### Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report is consistent with objective 4.6 of the Vaughan Vision 2007 statement to "Preserve and Enhance the Natural and Built Heritage Environment".

### Regional Implications

The proposed Thornhill heritage Conservation Plan is in accordance with the Regional objective to recognize, conserve and promote cultural heritage resources and to perpetuate their value and benefit to the community.

### Conclusion

The proposed Thornhill Heritage Conservation Plan 2007 incorporates the current Ontario Heritage Act practices and policies, and the Official Plan 669 policies for the Thornhill Yonge Street Commercial core. The Plan is comprehensive and includes policies and illustrative guidelines for preservation and restoration of heritage and non-heritage buildings on local streets, and Yonge Street, architectural guidelines for new buildings, as well as guidelines for general landscape and streetscape treatment.

Staff recommends the approval of the Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District Plan. Should Council concur, the recommendation contained in this report may be adopted.

### Attachments

1. Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District Boundary Area

2. Updated 2007 Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Building Inventory (Members of Council ONLY)
3. Proposed 2007 Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District Study/Plan (Members of Council ONLY)

**Report prepared by:**

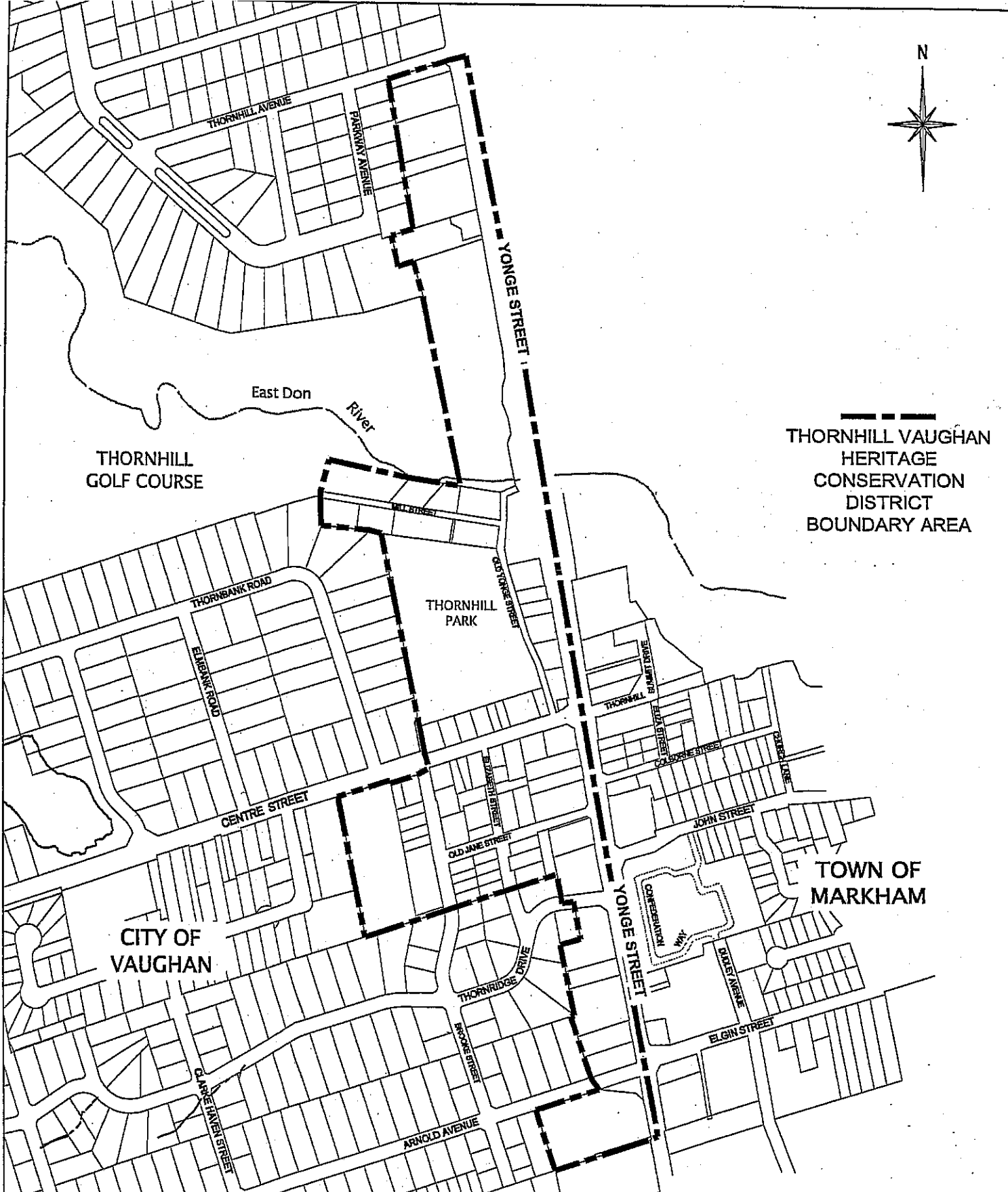
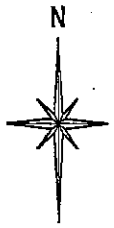
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Respectfully submitted,

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THORNHILL VAUGHAN  
HERITAGE  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT  
BOUNDARY AREA

THORNHILL  
GOLF COURSE

East Don  
River

THORNHILL  
PARK

CITY OF  
VAUGHAN

TOWN OF  
MARKHAM

**Committee of the  
Whole Meeting -  
October 15/07**



Policy Planning Department

**Attachment**

FILE No.:  
19.27

Not to Scale

October 15, 2007

**1**