

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - AUGUST 31, 2010

THORNHILL HISTORIC DISTRICT ROADS PROJECT

Recommendation

Councillor Alan Shefman recommends that:

1. The guardrails installed as part of the recent road project at the intersection of Jane and Elizabeth Streets be removed as soon as possible.
2. That the steel guardrails proposed for Brooke Street and Thornridge Drive not be installed.

Contribution to Sustainability

N/A

Economic Impact

1. Some costs involved in removing the currently installed guardrails.
2. Cost savings as a result of not installing other guardrails in the area.

Communications Plan

Residents of the immediate area shall be informed of the decision of Council including the timing for removal and remediation of the stone bridges associated with the guardrail installation.

Purpose

1. To reconsider the installation of highway type steel guardrails in the centre of the Thornhill Historic District.
2. To address the serious pedestrian safety issue that is evident with the current installation of steel guardrails.
3. To restore and preserve the nature of the Historic District, especially at the intersection of Jane and Elizabeth Streets.

Background - Analysis and Options

1. As a result of the deterioration of the road network in the Thornridge Drive and Thornhill Village area and as a result of a number of flooding incidents over the last five years, a major road rebuilding and storm water project was initiated in the fall of 2009 continuing through to the end of July 2010.
2. As the project was coming to completion massive steel guardrails were installed adjacent to the intersection of Jane and Elizabeth Streets. These streets are in the heart of the Historic District. Both streets have very limited traffic volumes and low speed limits due to their location. At the same time these streets are used by pedestrians and cyclists on a regular basis. There are no sidewalks in the majority of this area.
3. Residents of the area immediately responded with great distress when the guardrails were installed, stating a variety of concerns, especially noting their impact on the character of the area and the obvious overkill of placing barriers of that size at a location of limited traffic and very low speed limits.

4. On further consideration, residents also pointed out that the installation of the guardrails have significantly increased the risk of serious pedestrian injury as they are of such a height and the roads so narrow that a pedestrian would have no escape if a vehicle were to threaten them.
5. It has become clear that the design consultants for this project only considered the vehicular components in designing the roads and their features. They did not fully the broader issues, including pedestrian traffic and the nature of the Historic District.
6. At a time when the City of Vaughan proposed Official Plan is focusing on a people-scaled plan for the City with roadways being suggested that take into strong consideration both pedestrians and cyclists, this design was retrogressive in its design vis-à-vis the guardrails. This failure is even more profound when considering the fact that a portion of the project was located in a Historic District.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

None

Conclusion

1. The currently installed steel guardrails be removed immediately.
2. That no further guardrails be installed as part of this project.

Attachments

Report prepared by:

Debi Traub, Council Executive Assistant

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Shefman
Councillor, Ward 5