

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – NOVEMBER 15, 2011

VAUGHAN OFFICIAL PLAN – VOLUME 1 REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION ANLAND GROUP INC. 7386 ISLINGTON AVENUE WARD 2

The Commissioner of Planning recommends that:

1. As per the recommendation contained in Item 522 YR in Attachment 1 to the Special Committee of the Whole report at the meeting of September 12, 2011, Schedule 13 and Schedule 13-Q be modified to show a land use designation of Low-Rise Residential and a maximum density of 1.5 FSI (D1.5) and building height of 4 storeys (H4) on the portion of the subject lands not designated "Natural Areas"; and
2. This report be forwarded to the Region of York, as a recommended modification to VOP 2010, Volume 1, and that the Region of York be requested to modify the plan accordingly as part of the process leading to the approval of the Vaughan Official Plan 2010.

Economic Impact

There are no immediate economic impacts associated with this report.

Communications Plan

Direction to proceed to Committee of the Whole on November 15, 2011 with this report was given at the Council meeting of September 27, 2011. This report was posted on the City's website as part of the Committee of the Whole Agenda on November 4, 2011.

Purpose

This report provides the supplementary review of development potential in respect of the lands located at 7386 Islington Avenue (Item 522YR in Attachment 1 of the Special Committee of the Whole report on September 12, 2011). Council provided the following direction on September 27, 2011:

"That Item 522YR (west side of Islington Avenue north of Hwy. 407, Ward 2) be deferred to the Committee of the Whole meeting of November 15, 2011, to permit further consultation by staff, the applicant, and any required consultants of the most appropriate land use designation whether low, medium or high rise residential, particularly in light of the proposed Hwy. 407 GO Station immediately to the south;"

Background – Analysis and Options

Background

A letter dated May 24, 2011 was submitted to the Region of York by EMC Group Limited on behalf of the Anland Group Inc. in respect of 7386 Islington Avenue. The respondent requested modifications to the Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (Volume 1) as adopted by Council on September 7, 2010, as follows:

1. That a land use designation change be made for the developable portion of the parcel, from the current "Low-Rise Mixed-Use" (height provision of 4 storeys, density provision of 1.5 FSI), to "High-Rise Residential" (Height 16 storeys, Density 4.0 FSI).

2. The extent of the "Natural Areas" designation as it applies to the subject lands.

On June 13, 2011 staff from the Region of York and City of Vaughan met with the EMC Group Limited to discuss issues and concerns associated with the subject property. A follow up letter dated June 17, 2011 was submitted by EMC Group Limited to the Region of York reiterating the request for high density residential with an associated height of 16 storeys and density of 4 FSI.

A staff report to the Special Committee of the Whole Meeting on September 12, 2011 recommended that Schedule 13-Q of the Vaughan Official Plan (Volume 1) be modified to redesignate the subject lands from "Low-Rise Mixed Use" to "Low-Rise Residential" recognizing that due to limited frontage a mixed use development is likely not feasible at this location. However, the original maximum height of 4 storeys and FSI of 1.5 would remain with no further changes to the "Natural Area" designation.

At the September 27, 2011 Council Meeting, staff was directed to meet with the proponent to discuss options as to the most appropriate land use designation and density for the subject lands. On October 19, 2011 a meeting was held with the EMC Group Limited and Vaughan staff.

Upon further review of the subject lands, with consideration of the input from the proponent, staff can provide the following comments.

Existing Site Conditions and Context

The subject site is located in an isolated pocket of land bounded by Islington Avenue to the east and the Parkway Belt West, "Natural Areas", and the Hydro corridor to the north, west and south. Due to the topography of the parcel, access to the site is limited to a single shared driveway with the parcel to the north. The property to the north is designated Parkway Belt West Lands and it is situated at a significantly higher elevation, which necessitates a major retaining wall facing Islington Avenue. Visibility for southbound traffic at the entrance of the property is limited by this existing retaining wall. The curvilinear alignment of Islington Avenue, particularly further north and south of the site, creates traffic conditions that will be challenging for access and egress to and from Islington Avenue. Any future development on the site will need to coordinate access with future development on the east side of Islington Avenue to the satisfaction of the Region of York. In addition to the physical constraints of the site, the following issues will require more information and detailed review through the process of a complete development application:

- Approval from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing may be required for any redevelopment on lands affecting the existing shared access to the abutting lands covered by the Parkway Belt West Plan or subject to provincial encumbrances to the north.
- Approval from the Toronto and Regional Conservation Authority for any conditions required for Fill-Regulated Areas and TRCA policies including the TRCA Valley and Stream Corridor policies.
- Confirm the extent of the Hydro Corridor in relation to planned upgrades of existing towers and transmission infrastructure to include a 4th tower line and if the expropriation of additional lands on the subject property is required.
- The urban design approach to a uniquely situated site adjacent to a valley system.

Transportation

Schedule 9 - Future Transportation Network, identifies Islington Avenue as a "Major Arterial (Regional)". It is currently served by a York Region Transit (YRT) bus route. On the Schedule 10 - Transit Network, a proposed north-south Metrolinx – Bolton GO commuter rail service is shown, along with 5 proposed stations in Vaughan. One of the proposed stations is located at the southwest corner of Islington Avenue and Highway 407.

As a result, the proponent has noted that higher density development should be considered for the subject property which falls within a 500 metres radius of the proposed commuter station. Aside from the parcels immediately opposite the subject lands, there are no developable areas identified in the new Vaughan Official Plan up to Pioneer Lane/Legion Court north of the CN Rail Line.

Recently, the Development/Transportation Engineering Department brought forward a report to Council dated May 17, 2011 with a summary and staff comments on the Metrolinx presentation on the Bolton Commuter Rail Service Feasibility Study. It was noted in the report that the commuter rail line is a long term objective of GO/Metrolinx and further assessment is needed:

“Prior to the implementation of the Bolton commuter rail service, a Benefits Case, Environmental Assessment and Detail Design must be completed. Metrolinx has advised that these studies are unlikely to occur within the next 10 years given the projected modest 2031 ridership within the corridor and competing transit priorities in the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan.”

While GO Rail Service on the on the Bolton Rail Line remains a prospect for the future, it may be many years before it is implemented.

Areas of Intensification and Land Use

Schedule 1 – Urban Structure, shows the overall urban structure plan for the City and identifies appropriate locations for intensification. The heights and densities are strategically located in areas throughout Vaughan in support of the planned investments in public transit infrastructure. Islington Avenue was not identified as an Intensification Corridor. The subject lands are approximately 1.77 hectares in size. Approximately 1.43 hectares has been identified as Natural Areas which leaves approximately 0.34 hectares of developable lands.

In the new Vaughan Official Plan as proposed for modification on September 12, 2011, the site is given a new designation of Low-Rise Residential with a maximum height of 4 storeys and 1.5 FSI. The limited frontage on the site, along Islington Avenue, likely precludes a mixed-use development and should therefore be reconsidered for residential use only. The lands immediately opposite on Islington Avenue have been designated low-rise mixed use and also have a maximum height of 4 storeys and 1.5 FSI. A rezoning application for a proposed seniors building with a height of 3 to 4 storeys has been submitted based on the provisions of the current Official Plan and is under review by the Development Planning Department.

Given the restricted access, the size of the developable area, the location of the site in context of the urban structure plan, and the uncertain timing of the design and funding of the GO/Metrolinx commuter rail line the proposed density of 16 storeys and 4 FSI to the lands is not appropriate. However, with its current assigned density of maximum 4 storeys and 1.5 FSI, a mid-rise building form (apartments) on the site may be consistent with the intent of the new Official Plan. It would also be consistent with the density being proposed on the opposite side of Islington Avenue. The current Low-Rise Residential designation only permits the following building types:

- Detached House;
- Semi-Detached House;
- Townhouse; and,
- Public and Private Institutional Buildings

It is recognized that the “Low-Rise Residential” designation only permits ground related dwelling units, up to and including townhouses. Given the character of the site, there may be an opportunity for a low-rise apartment building, within the 1.5 FSI and 4 storey intensity envelope, subject to the applicant securing approvals from the Region, TRCA and Province. Should the owner wish to pursue this opportunity it is recommended that a site specific Official Plan

amendment application be submitted (possibly in conjunction with the implementing zoning amendment application) to permit this type of building form.

As a result, staff continues to recommend Low-Rise Residential as the land use designation on the subject site and to retain the maximum height of 4 storeys, and 1.5 FSI.

Regional Implications

Islington Avenue is a Regional road. As future development occurs on the subject site the land owner will need to resolve issues involving access to the site to the satisfaction of the Region of York.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities set out in Vaughan Vision 2020, particularly “Plan & Manage Growth & Economic Vitality”.

Conclusion

The staff recommendation to the Special Committee of the Whole meeting on September 12, 2011 supported a “Low-Rise Residential” designation with a maximum FSI of 1.5 and maximum building height of 4 storeys. This designation would permit detached houses, semi-detached houses and townhouses.

In discussion with the owner, staff further agreed to consider a change in the land use designation to “Mid-Rise Residential”, while maintaining the maximum height of 4 storeys. This would allow for the introduction of a building form that would provide additional flexibility in site development by permitting “Mid-Rise Buildings”, i.e. residential apartment buildings. Staff have decided not to recommend this approach given that the Mid-Rise Residential designation permits 5 – 12 storeys in height, potentially leading a land owner to have greater expectations for height than could be supported by a more detailed property analysis. Instead, the apartment building form could be pursued through a site-specific official plan amendment.

The recommended density of 1.5 FSI is considered to be a level of development potentially appropriate to this site and the immediate area. Islington Avenue is not defined as a “Primary Intensification Corridor”. As such VOP 2010 does not target this area for substantial densities. The site is relatively isolated, located between the Humber Valley to the north and major infrastructure to the south (CN and CP Rail, Highway 407 and the Hydro Corridor). It is some distance from local amenities in the Woodbridge Community and Islington Avenue through this section is constructed as a five-lane arterial road, without sidewalks. These factors limit walkability and promote automobile dependence, thereby making it a less attractive area for higher densities.

Based on the position of Metrolinx emerging from the Bolton Commuter Rail Feasibility Study, the introduction of GO Rail services on the Bolton line appears to be well into the future. While an area to the south of the subject lands has been identified as a potential station site it would be premature at this point to base a current land use decision on the prospect of GO Rail service on the Bolton line being initiated and the station being in place. Further, there is no opportunity for achieving substantial densities in this area due to the valleylands.

As noted the site has a number of challenges that will have to be addressed before the actual intensity of development and development form can be established. These considerations include access to the site, the extent of any environmental constraints on the land, topography, the availability of services and ensuring that the ultimate design on the site respects and complements the unique valleyland setting of the subject lands.

Staff is of the opinion that these issues can only be dealt with by way of a complete application with the necessary supporting studies. Therefore, the staff recommendation contained in the September 12, 2011 Special Committee of the Whole report on the VOP 2010 should be maintained. It recommends the redesignation of portions of the subject lands outside of the "Natural Areas" to "Low-Rise Residential".

It is recognized that the "Low-Rise Residential" designation only permits ground related dwelling units, up to and including townhouses. Given the character of the site, there may be an opportunity for a low-rise apartment building, within the 1.5 FSI and 4 storey intensity envelope, subject to the applicant securing approvals from the Region, TRCA and Province. Should the owner wish to pursue this opportunity it is recommended that a site specific Official Plan amendment application be submitted (possibly in conjunction with the implementing zoning amendment application) to permit this type of building form. This would be part of a "complete" application package that would address the issues identified in this report and allow for the determination of the appropriate development forms for the site.

Attachments

1. Location Map
2. Schedule 13-Q, "Land Use" – VOP 2010

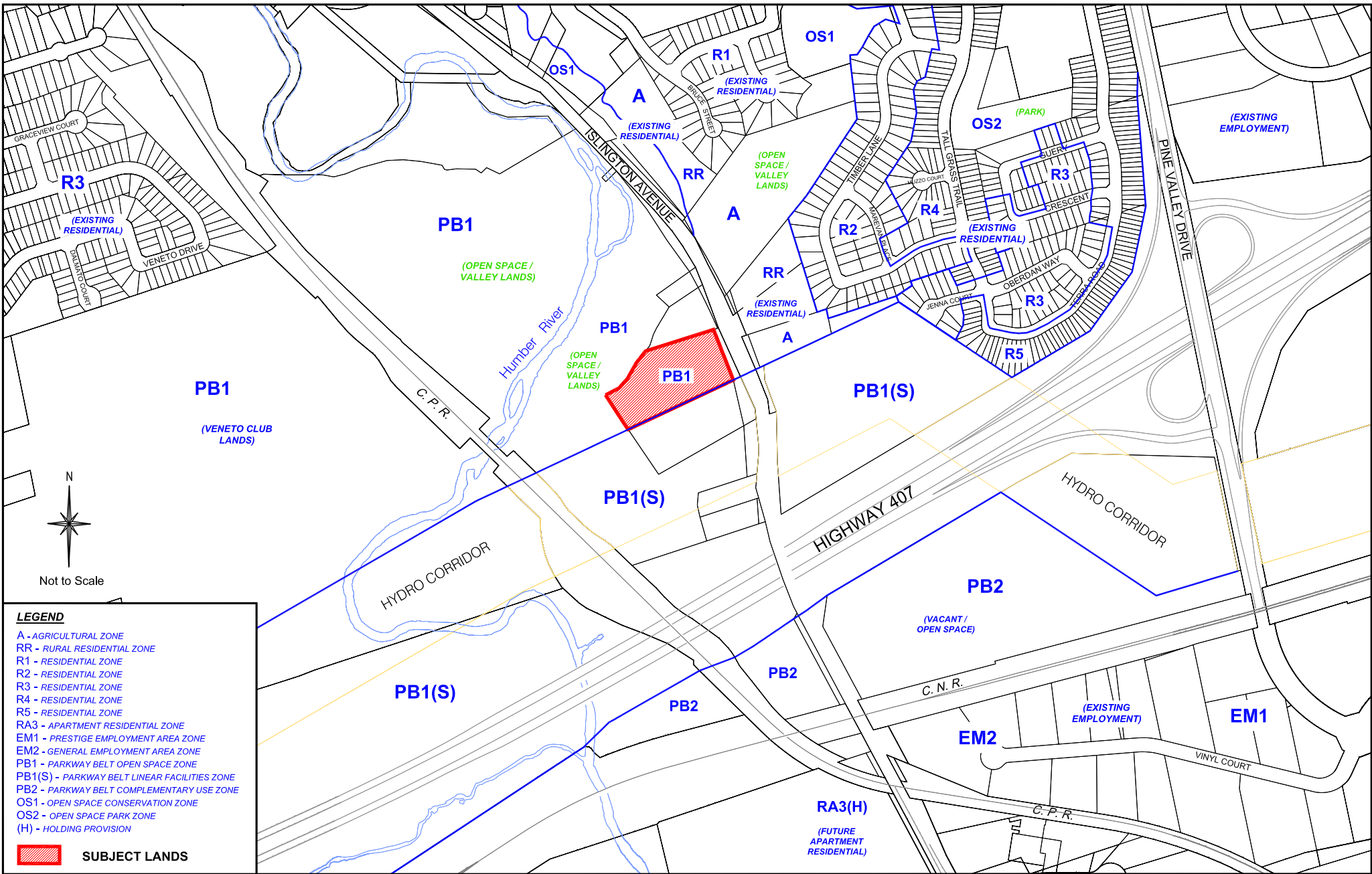
Report prepared by:

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Roy McQuillin, Manager of Policy Planning, ext. 8211

Respectfully submitted,

John Mackenzie
Commissioner of Planning

Diana Birchall
Director of Policy Planning



Location Map

Location: Part of Lot 4,
Concession 7

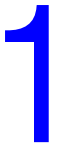
Applicant:
City of Vaughan



Attachment



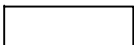
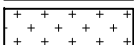

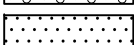

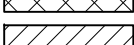
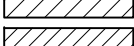



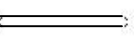
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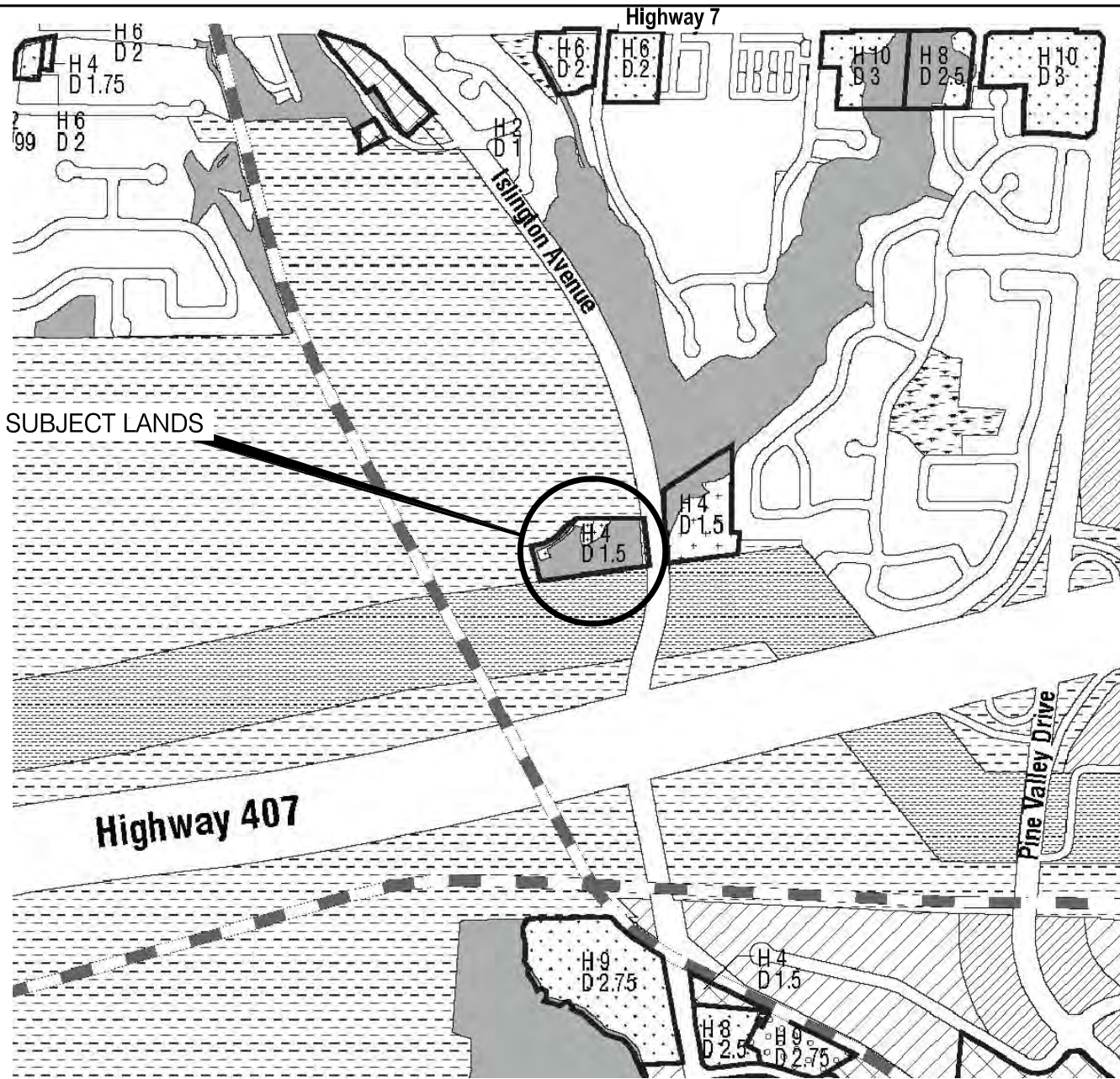
Date: October 27, 2011



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SCHEDULE 13-Q Land Use

-  Natural Areas
-  Parks
-  Low-Rise Residential
-  Low-Rise Mixed-Use
-  Mid-Rise Residential
-  Mid-Rise Mixed-Use
-  Commercial Mixed-Use
-  General Employment
-  Prestige Employment
-  Parkway Belt West Lands
-  Infrastructure & Utilities
-  Roads
-  Railway



Land Use Map

Location: Part of Lot 4,
Concession 7
Applicant:
City of Vaughan



Attachment

Address: 7386 Islington Avenue

Date: October 27, 2011

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