

**1. THORNHILL CENTRE STREET
 AREA LAND USE STUDY
 FILE: 26.10
 WARD 5**

P.2012.18

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends that:

1. That the Study Report for the Thornhill Centre Street Area Land Use Study (2012), prepared by the Planning Partnership, and the corresponding draft Land Use Plan/Policies be received; and that any issues identified by the public and Council, be addressed in a comprehensive report to Committee of the Whole.

Contribution to Sustainability

The proposed Centre Street Area Land Use Plan/Policies are consistent with “Green Directions Vaughan”, the City’s Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan. The Centre Street land use policies also conform to the Region of York’s policies for complete communities, providing policies for environmental protection, sustainable community design, and economic vitality and growth. The Centre Street Area Land Use policies address the following “Green Directions Vaughan” goals:

“Goal 2: Ensure sustainable development and re-development.”

Objective 2.2 “To develop Vaughan as a city with maximum greenspace and an urban form that supports our expected population growth.”

“Goal 4: To create a vibrant community for citizens, businesses and visitors.”

Objective 4.1 “To foster a city with strong social cohesion, an engaging arts scene, and a clear sense of its culture and heritage.”

Objective 4.2 “To ensure that the City of Vaughan attracts businesses and investment that will result in well-paying jobs for Vaughan citizens, a sustainable tax base, and continuing prosperity into the 21st century.”

Economic Impact

The Thornhill Centre Street Land Use Study was funded through the capital budget for the Vaughan Official Plan Project – PL-9003-07.

Communications Plan

The May 15, 2012 Public Hearing, was advertised on the City of Vaughan website on April 20, 2012. In addition, on April 20, 2012, notices were mailed directly to all landowners within the study area, to surrounding neighbours within 150 metres of the study area boundary, to ratepayer associations, and to individuals who had requested notification. A refined draft Land Use Study/Plan document was also posted on the City website on May 1, 2012 to permit public review of the document in advance of the Public Hearing date.

A newsletter was also prepared by the Communications Department in consultation with the Policy Planning Department, to address pertinent questions from residents in the vicinity of the study area and generally to promote understanding of the study process, and proposed draft Land Use Policy document to date. The newsletter was mailed together with the notice of Public Hearing on April 20, 2012.

Purpose

To present the Study Report and proposed draft Land Use Plan/Policies for the Centre Street study area at a Committee of the Whole Public Hearing. A final report with recommendations, which takes into consideration comments from the Public Hearing, and other public agencies, will proceed to a future Committee of the Whole Council meeting.

Background - Analysis and Options

Study Area

The study is located on the north side of Centre Street between Concord Road and New Westminster Drive. The review of the corridor between Vaughan Boulevard and New Westminster Drive was directed by Vaughan Council at its meeting of September 7, 2010, in consideration of the item pertaining to the City of Vaughan Official Plan 2010. The direction to undertake the study states:

“That staff be instructed to conduct a study of the area on the north side of Centre Street between New Westminster Drive and Vaughan Boulevard to consider its appropriate designation for intensification; and that any changes to the current designation that is before Council today be dealt with through modification at the York Region stage of review of this plan.”

After the Council meeting of September 7, 2010, the City received a request for modifications to the VOP 2010 land use designations from the owner of several lots located in the adjacent stretch of Centre Street, from Concord Road to Vaughan Boulevard. As a result staff recommended to Committee of the Whole on February 22, 2011 that this additional portion of the corridor be included in the land use study (see Attachment #1). This recommendation was approved by Committee and ratified at the Council meeting of March 8, 2011.

Existing Official Plan and Zoning

The Centre Street Study area is designated Commercial Mixed-Use “A”, “B”, and “C” in Volume 2 of the VOP 2010. Commercial Mixed-Use “A” permits small scale office uses and limited institutional use at a maximum density and height of 1.0 FSI, and 2.5 storeys; Commercial Mixed-Use “B” permits business and professional offices and commercial uses at a maximum density and height of 0.8 FSI and 3 storeys; Commercial Mixed-Use “C” permits a wider range of commercial uses including: existing commercial, retail stores, restaurants, banks and business and professional offices at a maximum density and height of 1.5 FSI and 4 storeys.

The subject lands are zoned R3 Residential Zone, C1-Restricted Commercial Zone, C2 General Commercial Zone, and C6 Highway Commercial Zone, subject to various exceptions across the different zoning categories.

The Planning Context

The Study area is subject to municipal, Regional and Provincial planning policy. Given its current character and policy context it presents the following challenges:

- The quality and role of the pedestrian realm has taken a secondary position to the role of the street as a vehicular transportation route. As a result the pedestrian activity is poor due to a general lack of attractive urban design attributes and amenities, and a lack of uses conducive to pedestrian activity in parts of the corridor.
- Existing densities, land uses and urban design in the study area are not reflective of Provincial, Regional or municipal policy for Regional Intensification Corridors.

The policies of the pertinent levels of government are discussed below.

(1) The Provincial Policy

The Provincial Policy Statement 2005 (PPS)

The PPS supports efficient land use, a mix of housing types and densities, residential intensification, public transit ridership and the protection of cultural heritage. It promotes the planning of public streets, spaces and facilities to meet the needs of pedestrians and facilitate pedestrian and non-motorized movement. It encourages growth in built up areas and identifies transit corridors within urban areas as key areas for intensification and redevelopment.

(i) Ontario Transit-Supportive Guidelines (2012)

The guidelines developed by the Ministry of Transportation in recognition of the Provincial investment in major transportation initiatives, and recent Provincial policies, emphasize the inter-dependent relationship between transit ridership and land use patterns. The guidelines are predicated on:

- the designing of “complete streets”; designing streets to reflect the land use and transportation context, and conversely organizing the appropriate land use mix to respond to the transportation context;
- establishing performance standards related to factors such as pedestrian safety, comfort and ease of use of transit and evaluating performance regularly;
- placing the highest density and greatest mix of uses nearest transit;
- promoting a pleasant pedestrian experience on routes to and from transit stops to boost ridership;
- safe and convenient streets for cyclists can extend the reach of transit as much as 5 km; and,
- accessible and attractive transit stops encourage transit use.

Places to Grow- The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006)

The Places to Grow Act provides a vision and growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe in Southern Ontario and is based on a set of principles for guiding decisions on how land is to be developed and public investments are managed. It supports the principles of building compact vibrant neighbourhoods, the protection and conservation of valuable natural resources, the optimization of the use of existing and new infrastructure to support growth in a

compact efficient form. It further specifies that intensification should be directed “generally throughout the “built-up area” and especially along intensification corridors and major transit station areas (Section 2.22.3.6).

It is noted that a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station is planned for the study area between Vaughan Blvd. and New Westminster Drive.

(2) The York Region Official Plan (YROP) (2009)

The York Region Official Plan was adopted by Regional Council in December of 2009 and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on September 7, 2010. It is currently subject to appeals and is awaiting an Ontario Municipal Board Hearing.

York Region's Intensification Strategy (2009), was developed in support of the York Region Official Plan. It is the basis for the Region's plan for delivering the amount of intensification required by the Province to meet the assigned level of population to 2031. The Intensification Strategy is based on a Regional Intensification Framework that includes a hierarchy of regional centres and corridors, GO stations, local centres and corridors, other major corridors, and local infill. All lower-tier municipalities are required to complete their own intensification strategy to meet intensification targets outlined in the YROP in accordance with the Regional hierarchy.

The Centre Street Study area is identified as part of a Regional Corridor and it links the Highway 7 and Bathurst Street portions of the corridor. The following policies in Sections 5.3 - Intensification and 5.4 - Regional Centres and Corridors, of the York Region Official Plan are of particular relevance to the Centre Street study area. It is also noted that these policies capture important highlights of the York Region Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines approved by the Region in 2006, and which are also applicable to Regional Corridors.

- (i) That Regional Corridors are planned to function as urban main streets that have a compact, mixed-use, well-designed, pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented built form.
- (ii) To require a comprehensive approach to intensification along Regional Corridors. Local municipalities will establish key development areas and other forms of intensification along Regional corridors. Key development areas once established will support an overall long term density target of 2.5 FSI for developable areas.
- (iii) That Regional corridors are planned to:
 - minimize the walking distance to anticipated transit stops through provision of walkways, and more direct road patterns and in urban areas. The distance to a transit stop should generally be no more than 500 m (5-10 minute walk) for 90% of residents, and no more than 200 m for 50% of residents;
 - encourage shared parking requirements and on-street parking;
 - to require, as a condition of development approval, the provision of facilities to encourage an increase in the mode share of cycling trips, such as covered bicycle storage, lockers, and shower facilities; and,
 - site design that orients the main building entrance(s) towards the street(s), and that does not permit the placement of surface parking spaces between the main building entrance and the major street.

The Centre Street Land Use Study Area is located adjacent to the Thornhill Town Centre (area between New Westminster Drive and Bathurst Street, north and south of Centre Street), which has been evolving as an urban centre since the early 1980s. Official Plan Amendment 671 (Thornhill Town Centre) approved in 2005, establishes a more detailed and updated policy framework to direct mixed-use development, including high-rise development, in this area. The Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (VOP 2010), recognizes the Thornhill Town Centre as a Primary Centre.

The study area because of its proximity to the Thornhill Town Centre, enjoys priority YRT bus service, and is projected to receive YRT Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service in the 2015-2020 timeframe. The study area, and in particular Site 1 (see Attachment #1), is considered a priority area for intensification because of its location adjacent to the Thornhill Town Centre, and the BRT stop which is projected to be sited mid-block between Vaughan Boulevard and New Westminster Drive.

(3) The City of Vaughan Official Plan (VOP 2010)

The VOP 2010 establishes an urban structure plan for directing growth throughout the City. This structure is outlined in section 2.2.1.1 of the Official Plan which includes a hierarchy of intensification areas that vary from the higher to lower densities and mix of uses. At the top of this hierarchy are the following: The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (the Regional Centre), the Regional Intensification Corridors, and then Primary Centres, Local Centres, and Primary Intensification Corridors. The City's urban structure was established to conform to Provincial and Regional policy. With respect to Regional Intensification Corridors, the following description is provided in section 2.2.1.1:

- “ ii. Regional Intensification Corridors will be a major focus for intensification on the lands adjacent to major transit routes, at densities and in a form supportive of the adjacent higher-order transit. The Regional Intensification Corridors link the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre with other intensification areas in Vaughan and across York Region.”

The VOP 2010 also states that the policies related to Intensification Areas will be consistent with policies for such areas as identified in the Provincial Policy Statement, the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the York Region Official Plan.

It is noted that at the time Volume 2 of the VOP 2010 was prepared the “vision” for an intensified corridor had not yet been established. Therefore the site specific policies contained in Volume 2, applying to Centre Street, are a carry-over of the previous OPA 672 (The Thornhill Centre Street Official Plan Amendment, 2005) policies. The “Where and How to Grow - Directions on future growth in the City of Vaughan to 2031” report, prepared by Urban Strategies Inc., does however identify the study area as a “Priority Opportunity Area” for intensification.

The Study

The Thornhill Centre Street Area Land Use Study was undertaken by City of Vaughan staff and the City's Consultant, the Planning Partnership. The Land Use Study has been completed in co-ordination with the Thornhill Centre Street Corridor Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Master Plan for a wider study area, extending along Centre Street from Hwy 7 to Bathurst Street. The land use component of the study was initiated in late March of 2011.

The Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Master Plan

The Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Master Plan Study for the wider study area began in January of 2010 and has been ongoing in co-ordination with the Land Use Study since the latter was initiated in March of 2011. The draft Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Master Plan documents were presented at the Public Open House on November 23, 2011 and are posted on the City website. Both documents will be presented at a future Working Session of Council once a final draft of each has been prepared.

The Development of the Draft Land Use Plan/Policies

The next several sections of this report summarize the study process and main considerations in the development of the proposed Centre Street Plan and land use policies. The major components of the planning process are described under the following five headings: (1) Community Consultation; (2) Key Principles and Objectives Shaping the New Vision for the Study Area; (3) Regional Corridors: Provincial, Regional, and Municipal Policy Frameworks; (4) Transitioning to the Surrounding Low-Rise Neighbourhoods; and (5) Refinements to the Draft Thornhill Centre Street Plan/Policies since the Public Open House of November 23, 2011. The preferred land use plan is a result of applying the principles for transformation highlighted in the "Key Principles and Objectives" section, and the public input provided throughout the consultation process.

(1) Community Consultation

The study process included a public consultation program in association with the Thornhill Centre Street Corridor Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Master Plan Study (the principle study).

Workshops were held with the surrounding community and study area landowners on May 5 and June 7 of 2011 to introduce the land use study, provide an update on the study progress for the Streetscape Master Plan, and to conduct a workshop on the land use component of this combined study. The community within the study area, and surrounding area were notified of the workshops by mail on April 21st, and May 23rd respectively, and the notices were also posted two weeks in advance of each workshop date on the City website. The workshops were well attended with over 30 people participating at each event.

An Open House was held on November 23, 2011 to present the draft Land Use Plan, Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Master Plan. The draft Land Use Study/Plan document was also posted on the City website under the quick links menu - "Major Projects and Reports", to permit the community to review the proposed policies and design guidelines prior to the open house event.

(2) Key Principles and Objectives Shaping the New Vision for the Study Area

The preferred land use plan for the study area was developed in accordance with the objectives and principles which are outlined below; and, which were prepared in consultation with the study area stakeholders and surrounding residents.

- (i) Create a destination with a strong visual identity and sense of place by enhancing the landscape and built environment.
- (ii) Promote high quality design by enhancing the streetscape, open spaces, pathways, architecture and amenities.

- (iii) Develop a mixed-use corridor based on the following objectives:
- evolve from an auto-oriented street to a multi-modal corridor;
 - enhance the pedestrian experience and facilitate pedestrian movement;
 - create a unified and high quality streetscape;
 - integrate environmental sustainability;
 - ensure development is of an appropriate scale that engages the street and transitions to the neighbourhoods; and,
 - ensure that all public spaces are designed to be accessible and safe.
- (iv) Respect the existing neighbourhoods: Proposed development concepts should complement the adjacent low-rise residential neighbourhood by providing a transition in scale. Higher densities should be located adjacent to Centre Street and the Town Centre, and transition down towards the northerly and westerly established low density neighbourhoods. In addition, urban design guidelines should ensure that any potential adverse affects of proposed higher density development are mitigated through carefully considered design features and requirements.
- (v) Have regard for the Provincial, Regional and municipal planning frameworks for Regional Corridors/Regional Intensification Corridors: The planning framework generally provides that these corridors be planned to function as urban main streets that have a compact, mixed-use, well-designed, pedestrian friendly, and transit-oriented built form, with densities supportive of planned public transit.

(3) Regional Corridors: Application of Provincial, Regional, and Municipal Policy Frameworks

The Provincial, Regional and municipal policy frameworks for Regional Corridors/Regional Intensification Corridors provide that these streets and adjacent lands be planned in consideration of public transit. The policies direct that land uses, densities and urban design should encourage ridership among local residents and employees working in the area. The governing policies for Regional Corridors speak to the “Four Principles of Transit Supportive Planning”. It is important to note that the focus of the transit supportive planning principles on quality urban design and pedestrian friendly streets/connections, is consistent with the “Key Principles and Objectives” for the study area, as outlined in the previous section of this report:

- (i) There is a direct relationship between transit ridership and distance from the station.

Locating development within a short walking distance (five-minute walk, or about 300 to 500 m from transit stations), encourages transit use, thereby maximizing transit ridership. The preferred plan for Centre Street places all residents of the corridor between Vaughan Blvd. and New Westminster Drive, within a 300 metre walk of the planned transit station. The portion of the corridor between Concord Road and Vaughan Blvd. falls within 500 m which is also considered in close proximity to the planned station between Vaughan Boulevard and New Westminster Drive.

- (ii) Density drives transit ridership.

This second principle is based on studies which conclude that there is a strong relationship between density and transit ridership. The higher the density (residents and/or employees, and preferably both), the higher the transit ridership potential. In recommending a 2.06 FSI for Site 1, and 1.29 FSI for Site 2, the preferred plan respects the intent to intensify along Regional Corridors, while at the same time

recognizing that there is an established low-rise residential community in close proximity to this portion of the corridor.

- (iii) Land use has an impact on transit use patterns.

To promote a balanced ridership pattern it is ideal to have multiple land uses in proximity to each other. In addition, mixed land uses are also beneficial for creating lively streets and complete communities. The preferred plan introduces mixed use residential/commercial development. With an estimated ratio of 2 residents for every 1 job, the preferred Plan has the potential to achieve the recommended resident to employment ratio of approximately 2:1 provided by the Regional Official Plan (section 4.1.2).

Development Statistics for Sites 1 and 2

| | Site 1 | Site 2 |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Site Area | 9.48 ha | 2.42 ha |
| Total GFA | 144,843 m ² | 31,175 m ² |
| Residential GFA | 102,855 m ² | 19,751 m ² |
| Retail GFA | 19,476 m ² | 3,890 m ² |
| Office GFA | 22,512 m ² | 7,534 m ² |
| FSI (Net) | 2.06 | 1.29 |
| Parkland | 0.69 ha | 0 |
| Private Amenity Space | 0 | 0.31 ha |
| No. of Units | 937 | 220 |
| No. of Units per ha | 133 uph | 91 uph |
| No. of Residents * | 1,966 | 461 |
| No. of Retail Jobs | 487 | 97 |
| No. of Office Jobs | 834 | 279 |

* No. of Residents is based on average unit size for applicable residential typologies and typical persons per unit figures from Table 7 of the City of Vaughan's *Where and How to Grow* report. Employment estimates are based on the assumption that office space generates 1 job/27m², and retail space generates 1 job/40 m².

- (iv) Good urban design has an impact on ridership.

Good urban design has an impact on ridership by enhancing mobility and comfort at stations and along pedestrian routes to and from transit stations. Special attention to design is essential for the streetscape and mobility networks, buildings, transit stations, open spaces and public realm in general. Buildings should relate to streets and transit stations, and provide shelter, interest and amenity to pedestrians and the block pattern should be permeable. Streets should be designed to accommodate various transportation modes, but also act as public places in their own right. Land uses, built form, and streetscape elements should create attractive, safe and accessible surroundings. These elements include sidewalks, street furniture, trees and other special landscaping.

Although more detail will be provided respecting the Streetscape Master Plan and Urban Design aspects of the Centre Street Study in a subsequent report to a Working Session of Council, it is important to note at this point that a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the design of the Centre Street right-of-way and the local street

network to ensure a comfortable and esthetically pleasing public realm for pedestrians. The land uses at the street edge have also been developed to ensure activity on the street with commercial or other active uses at grade. The draft Urban Design Guidelines ensure that the massing of buildings and the public realm will respond to the surrounding context and frame the street.

(4) Transitioning to the Surrounding Low –Rise Residential Neighbourhoods

While new mixed-use development and higher-order transit typically invigorates an area and its surrounding neighbourhoods by introducing pronounced urban design improvements and desirable amenities; it is also recognized that careful integration of higher density development with established adjacent low-rise residential is imperative. Therefore an important objective in developing the preferred land use vision was that the established low-rise neighbourhoods located in close proximity to the study area not be negatively impacted by new development on the subject lands. To address this concern, the preferred land use plan has been organized into descending heights/densities towards the existing low density residential located to the north. The heights step down to a maximum 2.5 storeys in the north portion of the proposed plan, and the potentially higher traffic and noise generating commercial uses front onto Centre Street.

Also, the Urban Design Guidelines provide for building heights taller than 3 storeys and within 80 m of an established low-rise residential area to be subject to a 45 –degree angular plane originating from the nearest property line of that low-rise residential area. This particular guideline is provided to mitigate the impact of shadowing on the surrounding residential areas. As well, a minimum 4 m treed landscape buffer has been required at the north boundary of the study area as an attractive screening interface to the established low density residential areas. Additional measures for the interface with the established residential community have been provided in the proposed Urban Design Guidelines and they include, but are not limited to:

- Directing access to parking and servicing areas, and surface parking away from the abutting residential.
- Providing for screening of HVAC and other mechanical equipment.
- Design of building elevations which are complementary to adjacent existing residential.
- Lighting approaches sensitive to adjacent residential.

(5) Refinements to the Draft Thornhill Centre Street Plan/Policies since the Public Open House of November 23, 2011

Since the time of the final public consultation meeting on November 23, 2011, the draft Land Use Plan/Policies have been refined taking into consideration preliminary comments from the Region of York, internal City Departments, landowners within the study area, and residents in the surrounding community. Refinements which may be of particular importance to the community and area land owners are noted as follows:

- (i) The proposed maximum heights within the Mid-Rise Mixed-Use designation which were previously shown as 10 storeys fronting the north side of Centre Street, have now been reduced to 8 storeys. This change is in consideration of the surrounding land use context, and particularly the concern expressed by the community respecting proposed heights.
- (ii) The maximum height at the northeast corner of Centre Street and Concord Road has been reduced from 6 storeys to 2.5 storeys. This adjustment was made to provide a

better transition in height from the subject lands to the existing low-rise residential lots located immediately across Concord Road on the north/west corner of this intersection.

- (iii) Maximum heights at the northeast corner of Centre Street and Vaughan Boulevard, within the Mid-Rise Mixed-Use “B” designation, have also been reduced from a 6 storey maximum fronting Centre Street, to 4 storeys, and 2.5 storeys respectively, towards the corner. This proposed modification will provide more consistency with respect to heights of recently constructed buildings on the northwest corner of this intersection. The height reduction will also provide a better transition to the side yard of the low-rise residential lot immediately to the north of the subject lands.
- (iv) The following policy has been added to the proposed land use policies (section 12.10.2.1, c. ii.) :

“In addition to the minimum rear yard setback requirement, a minimum 4 metre landscaped buffer consisting of a minimum double row of trees, is required extending for the entire length of the rear property line where abutting an existing low-rise residential property.”

This policy will ensure that the buffer which is introduced in the (draft) Centre Street Urban Design Guidelines, is designed to provide a consistent privacy buffer between new development on the subject lands and the established low-rise residential lots to the north.

- (v) The heights within the Low-Rise Residential “A” designation have been reduced from a maximum of 3 storeys to a maximum of 2.5 (or 9.5 m).

In addition, the maximum height in the northern portion of the Mid-Rise Mixed-Use “B” designation remains at 2.5 storeys; however, the maximum height in metres has been reduced from 11 m to 9.5 m, providing a consistent approach throughout the northerly interface of the subject lands with the adjacent low-rise residential community.

- (vi) A policy has been added to the Mid-Rise Residential designation to permit two restaurant(s) and/or café(s), in a mixed-use built form, fronting onto the proposed park to the north. Each of the two establishments is limited to a maximum gross floor area of 500 sq.m. This policy will provide the possibility for a social meeting area/amenity to complement the public park.
- (vii) The east/west public street proposed in Site 1 has been re-aligned to meet New Westminster Drive at an access point directly aligned to the access point of the planned east/west street on the east side of New Westminster Drive.
- (viii) Section 12.10.5.2, f. and G. respecting the maximum permitted GFA for individual retail uses within the Mid-Rise Mixed-Use “A” designation has been revised for clarity to read:

“f. Retail uses, including restaurants, up to a maximum permitted GFA of 2,000 sq.m per individual establishment, subject to the policies of section 5.2.3.”

“g. No more than one grocery store, which shall not exceed a maximum permitted GFA of 7,000 sq.m.”

- (iv) A separate Land Use Schedule has been added to the policy document reflecting the proposed maximum net FSIs for the different designations within the study area; whereas in the original draft of the Plan, the FSIs were shown as average gross FSIs across the various designations. The assignment of net FSI maximums will assist City staff when reviewing development applications for smaller land parcels within a particular designation. In some instances the FSIs have also been revised to reflect changes to the concept plan, land use policies, and urban design policies as a result of modifications to the original draft Plan as described above.

The Proposed Land Use Plan/Policies

The proposed land use Plan and policies for the Thornhill Centre Street Study area are summarized as follows:

(1) Land Use Designations

The following land use designations are proposed for the study area:

(i) Low-Rise Residential “A”

The Low-Rise Residential “A” designation permits residential units in the form of townhouses, and public and private open space. The net maximum density and height permitted within this designation is .75 FSI and 2.5 storeys (or 9.5 m, whichever is less), respectively. This designation provides the transition between the higher densities and heights proposed in the southerly portion of Site 1 (see Attachment # 2) of the study area, and the established low-rise residential community on Katerina Avenue to the north.

(ii) Mid-Rise Residential

The permitted uses within the Mid-Rise Residential designation include residential units in the form of mid-rise buildings, home occupations, community facilities, day cares, and public and private open spaces. The maximum net density and height permitted within this designation are 2.5 FSI and 6 storeys, respectively. This designation helps achieve the higher densities expected in the Regional corridor while providing the transition to the higher density mixed-use designation immediately adjacent to Centre Street. Two restaurant(s) and/or café(s) are also permitted within this designation within a mid-rise residential building, fronting onto the public park. Each of the two eating establishments is limited to a maximum gross floor area of 500 sq.m.

(iii) Mid-Rise Mixed-Use “A”

The Mid-Rise Mixed-use “A” designation permits residential, commercial, community, and cultural uses in a mixed-use, mid-rise building format with commercial or cultural/community uses required at grade. This designation permits a maximum net density of 2.8 FSI, and a range of heights from 3-8 storeys, with a maximum height of 12 storeys permitted at the northwest corner of Centre Street and New Westminster Drive (see Attachment #2). This designation helps to achieve the transit supportive densities and street animation expected in a Regional Corridor.

(iv) Mid-Rise Mixed-Use “B”

The uses permitted in this designation include residential units, home occupations, community facilities, day cares, cultural uses, retail and restaurant uses, office uses and public and private open spaces. Buildings must be in a mixed-use building form with commercial or cultural/community facility uses provided at grade. The proposed designation permits a maximum net density of 1.6 FSI and heights ranging from 2.5 to 6 storeys respectively (see Attachment #2). It contributes to the density targets established for the Regional Corridor, but recognizes the transition to the established low-rise residential neighbourhood to the north. The building form which introduces residential mixed-use development with commercial elements, including retail and restaurant uses along the Centre Street frontage, seeks to animate this portion of the corridor.

(2) Urban Design Policies

The focus of the proposed urban design policies is to create an attractive, safe and pedestrian-friendly environment, and to provide transitioning policies where applicable, to benefit the nearby established low-rise neighbourhoods. The over-arching design policies are summarized as follows:

- (i) Buildings shall have active facades including primary windows and entrances facing the street;
- (ii) Buildings fronting on public or private streets shall not be separated from the street by either parking areas or drive aisles;
- (iii) Buildings shall be sited to minimize their impact on neighbouring properties;
- (iv) Further reverse lot development will not be permitted on Centre Street;
- (v) Buildings shall be designed with high quality architectural materials, and variation in certain elements of façade treatment should be provided;
- (vi) Surface parking if required, shall be located at the interior of a development block, and screened by buildings. Access to underground parking shall be appropriately integrated into the building it serves and located so as to minimize physical and visual impacts on public sidewalks and open spaces.
- (vii) The following set-back requirements are provided:
 - a. A build-within zone 2.0 m – 3 m from any lot line fronting a street.
 - b. Notwithstanding (a) above, buildings fronting on Centre Street between New Westminster Drive and Vaughan Boulevard shall be setback a minimum of 7 m from the front lot line; and, a minimum of 6 m between Vaughan Boulevard and Concord Road.
 - c. A minimum rear yard setback of 7.5 m is required for any development abutting an existing residential property. Where detached rear garages are provided and accessed by a rear laneway, the minimum rear yard setback shall be 13.5 m from the laneway.

- (viii) Minimum step-backs are provided for buildings of various heights.
- (ix) A minimum facing separation distance of 20 m between adjacent buildings for all portions of the buildings taller than 6 storeys or 22 m.
- (x) Design policies specific to buildings greater than 8 storeys in height.
- (xi) All proposed developments within the land use study area may be subject to review by the City's Design Review Panel.

(3) Open Space and Community Services

The proposed land use plan includes two urban parks with a total area of 0.69 ha, and an urban square in Site 1. An urban square is proposed at the future transit station between New Westminster Drive and Vaughan Boulevard. Other private open spaces, and an additional urban square, while not required by the Official Plan policies are included for consideration in the concept plan included in the Land Use Study document and in the "Centre Street Urban Design Guidelines" document. The public square(s) will provide amenity space for social activities and passive recreation.

The land use study area is located within the wider Thornhill Community Planning Area (CPA) # 9 identified in the City of Vaughan's Active Together Master Plan (see Attachment #4). The Active Together Master Plan identifies a need for both additional active and passive parkland for CPA # 9 by 2031. However, given the location of the study area immediately adjacent to a Regional Corridor, and the relatively limited area of the subject lands; the Thornhill Centre Street Study Report (2012), indicates that the amount of parkland, and parkland typology proposed, although yielding less than the proposed unit total would demand in parkland dedication, is appropriate for the Plan. It is suggested that the cash-in-lieu of parkland funds which would be provided through development of the subject lands, should be used to acquire parkland where the opportunities arise within the broader CPA # 9.

The Active Together Plan also identifies other community service/facility needs in the CPA # 9. Appendix 1 of the draft land use policies provides a priority list which service needs as benefits to be considered under the Section 37 Bonusing provisions of the Planning Act. The suggested use of Section 37 Bonusing provisions is expanded upon in a subsequent section of this report.

(4) Street Network and Streetscape Treatment

The study area is organized in flexible development blocks that support a fine-grained street network that is highly permeable to pedestrians; and, the massing of buildings has been designed to respond to the surrounding context and frame the street. Local streets are designed to connect destinations with a particular emphasis on the pedestrian experience, while avenues will contribute to the creation of lively commercial streets. Boulevards will feature a significant public interface to support retail, high activity nodes such as urban squares, and other key public destinations.

To create lively multi-modal streets the development concept includes three street typologies for the length of Centre Street between Dufferin Street and Bathurst Street: avenues, boulevards and greenways. The future staff report on the Streetscape Master Plan will describe in detail the features of each of these typologies. The particular typology which applies to the Centre Street right of way within the land use study area is the "boulevard" form.

The boulevard typology is tailored to respond to the unique single-sided urban condition which exists throughout the portion of Centre Street that is the focus of the land use study. Because of the challenge created by the back-lotted residential condition on the south side of Centre Street, the majority of the activity and animation on the street will occur on the north side of Centre Street. In order to achieve a complete street with a vibrant urban interface, generous setbacks are recommended. Design themes for this portion of the Centre Street streetscape include accommodation of heavy to moderate pedestrian activity, patio spill-out space, and an increased emphasis on landscape treatments. The treatment proposed for the north side of Centre Street between Concord Road and New Westminster Drive, includes the following components:

- Up to a 45 m wide ROW for Centre Street
- 0.5 m wide paver snow strip adjacent to roadways as per YRRT details
- 2.8 m wide parking lay-by where possible
- 2.3 m wide tree and furnishing zones including long rain garden planters
- 2.0 m wide concrete paved sidewalk
- Pedestrian scale lighting
- High quality furnishings

Internal to the study area, two new local public streets (an east/west and a north/south) are proposed on Site 1, and several new private streets are expected throughout the study area as conceptualized on Attachment # 3 to this report. The public streets, one of which intersects with New Westminster Drive, and the other with Centre Street, will facilitate the traffic volumes expected in the immediate vicinity of the large food store, and the higher density residential areas of the study area.

(5) Application of Section 37 of the Planning Act (Bonusing Provisions)

The draft Thornhill Centre Street land use policies provide for the use of Section 37 Bonusing provisions within the Mid-Rise Mixed –Use "A" land use designation of the Plan. The policies allow the City to consider additional density and height beyond the permitted maximums set for this designation, in exchange for community benefits. The consideration of Section 37 use and the evaluation of relevant community benefits, will take place during the development review process. The community benefits are prioritized as follows:

- (i) Monetary contributions towards funding enhanced streetscaping in the Centre Street corridor.
- (ii) The following community service/facility needs within the Plan area and broader Community Planning Area (CPA) # 9, in addition to the community benefits identified for Section 37 use in the VOP 2010, are to be considered in the priority in which they are listed:
 - a) Cultural amenities, including public art and outdoor cultural event space within the boundaries of the subject lands.
 - b) The provision of community facilities as identified by the City, within the boundaries of the subject lands.
 - c) The following community services/facilities within the broader CPA #9-Thornhill:

- Renewal of existing community centre facilities, library space, and indoor skating arenas.
- Other community services/facilities identified by the City.

Summary of Predominant Comments respecting (draft) Land Use Plan/Policies received from Surrounding Residents

A. The City of Vaughan has received a number of letters from residents within the surrounding Thornhill community and from the landowners in the study area. Two petitions have been received by the City with respect to the Centre Street Study, one of which objects to the York Region vivaNext Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line for this stretch of Centre Street. This petition represents 14 residential addresses in the vicinity of the study area. The BRT line is planned to run from Highway 7 along Centre Street to Bathurst in the 2015-2020 time frame. It is important to note that as part of the "Hwy. 7 Corridor and Vaughan North-South Link Public Transit Improvements Environmental Assessment, 2005", three alignment alternatives were evaluated in the area between Yonge and Keele Streets:

- 1) Along Highway 7 between Centre and Bathurst Streets.
- 2) Along the Hydro right-of-way between Centre and Bathurst Streets.
- 3) Along Centre Street between Highway 7 and Bathurst Street, connecting back to Highway 7 at Bathurst Street.

The third alternative was approved in consideration of the following factors:

- The route serves existing demand, community facilities and a major shopping area while also providing the opportunity for urban design improvements in the rights-of-way.
- It has the potential to attract ridership from existing commercial and residential land uses on both sides of the alignment, as well as future transit-oriented intensification and redevelopment at the Dufferin and Bathurst nodes on Centre Street.
- A connection to a future 407 Transitway service can be achieved at the Bathurst and Highway 7 intersection.

The second petition which is in response to the proposed land use plan/policies, represents 162 residential homes located in close proximity to the study area (located within approximately 150 m of the boundary of the subject lands), and 58 residential homes in the wider community (greater than 150 m from the boundary of the study area). The issues identified by residents within the petition, and staff responses to same are summarized as follows:

- 1. The height maximum for new development in the subject lands should be 2.5 storeys as greater heights are perceived as blocking sunlight to the existing surrounding residential.**

Response:

The shadow impact analysis of the development concept plan, shows that shadow impacts on the existing residences are no different, and in some instances better than the existing as-of-right development permissions allow. This is the case for most properties, with the exception being minimal impact on some properties along Lawrie Road during the colder months (December-February).

Between March 21 and September 21, when shadow impacts are of greatest concern for pedestrians or for backyard use, there are no shadow impacts on adjacent properties. During the winter solstice (December 21) when the sun is at its lowest point, even 2.5 storey buildings cast long shadows onto adjacent properties in the earlier and later hours of the day. However, shadow impacts are minimal and not adverse, with some shadows reaching into several adjacent properties for no more than a 2-hour duration. It should be noted that there are virtually no impacts by the afternoon hours, and that in some cases the impacts would be greater under current regulations, particularly for properties along Katerina Ave.

2. The greater density proposed will cause increased traffic congestion.

Response:

There will be negligible added vehicular traffic once the modal split is considered. The primary boundary streets are forecast to provide reasonable and good levels of operating conditions, and there is no incentive for background traffic to leave the primary streets and initiate a slow stop and go trip through a residential area. Rapid transit will make this area highly accessible, providing viable transportation options to the car and better operating conditions for primary vehicle movements on Centre Street.

3. The existing commercial should remain as it serves the surrounding community.

Response:

The viable commercial establishments, including the No Frills food store are likely to re-locate to the Centre Street frontage where they will still be in close proximity to the surrounding community. The re-location is strategic in order to minimize nuisance effects on adjacent residential uses and to animate the newly designed sidewalk and boulevard. It is anticipated that given the proposed design improvements, and residential intensification, additional commercial uses will be drawn to this location.

Additional issues raised by individual residents perceived to be related to mid-rise development:

1. Increased night light pollution.

Response:

The City regulates light pollution through the Site Plan Approval process which is required for commercial and mixed-use developments. As a condition of development approval for any commercial or mixed-use development, a lighting plan with an appropriate photometric design must be submitted which demonstrates that the proposed lighting plan will not have an impact on adjacent properties.

In addition, the Centre Street Urban Design Guidelines, section 6.4 – Lighting, provides lighting guidelines for private developments as follows:

“Lighting should be downcast with full cutoff to reduce light pollution and address night sky condition.”

2. Decrease in air quality which can adversely impact our health and well-being as well as discourage pedestrian and bicycle movement.

Response:

The fundamental premise of the proposed land uses and design guidelines are to create an environment conducive to, and supportive of, walking, cycling and transit choices thereby improving the current conditions. In addition the Streetscape Master Plan introduces pedestrian and cycling-friendly streetscape design, including dedicated cycling lanes, an increased number of pedestrian and cycling connections, and a substantial enhancement of the pedestrian realm. The public realm enhancements include pedestrian lighting, planting, decorative paving, pedestrian wayfinding and signage, clearly delineated crosswalks, and street furnishings. All of the foregoing should in fact encourage pedestrian and bicycle movement rather than deter it, as well as rendering these modes of travel safer. In addition, all streetscape elements are designed to comply with the emerging Ontario Accessible Built Environment Standards.

3. Increased noise pollution.

Response:

Continuous mid-rise buildings proposed fronting on Centre Street, in conjunction with enhanced streetscaping that will include more trees and calmed traffic, will serve as a buffer, so that there would actually be a reduction in the audibility of noise and vibration produced by traffic on the arterial streets, as a result of the proposed development.

4. Threaten our backyard privacy.

Response:

Overlook on adjacent properties that would infringe on privacy is a consequence of a taller building in close enough proximity to enable direct view into a yard or house. The combination of required rear yard setbacks or street separations, landscaped buffers, angular planes and height limits ensure that there are no adverse overlook issues associated with new developments abutting or adjacent to existing neighbourhoods.

5. Decreased enjoyment of our private and public green space.

Response:

There is no foreseen decrease of enjoyment of private green space as explained in the responses above; and, where currently there is no public green space within the subject lands, the development of the proposed plan would add two new public parks (totaling approximately .69 ha of open space), and an urban square creating a social gathering space for the community. In addition a 4m green buffer is proposed between new development and abutting existing development comprising a mixture of green elements, including street trees, and planting areas. Wider sidewalks with landscaped boulevards are also introduced.

6. Potentially decreased the resale value of our single family homes.

Response:

There are a number of examples that can be cited which actually assert that the opposite is true. Higher order transit by virtue of the convenience value of public transportation; enhanced streetscapes; and, increased urban design quality and public amenity which typically accompany the installation of the new transit service, tend to increase the value of properties in adjacent neighbourhoods. A few examples are provided as follows:

- (i) Vancouver's sky train on Cambie Street- The LRT service which opened for operation on Cambie Street in Vancouver in 2009 has been credited for the more than doubling of nearby real estate values, which began at price ranges in the 1.5 million bracket and now average around 3 million. (Vaughan Citizen- February 26, 2012- "Keep Communities in Mind, Group Hears").
- (ii) A comprehensive study of property values adjacent to new rail transit investments in American cities overwhelmingly concluded a positive impact that varied between 3% and 40%, with the greater increases correlating with the closer proximity to the transit stations. There was also an even more positive impact on higher income areas. (Roderick Diaz, "Impacts of Rail Transit on Property Values").
- (iii) A review of 22 major published works on the impacts of LRTs across North America concluded that there was a direct correlation between increased residential property values and accessibility to higher order transit infrastructure. Moreover, the few instances where there was a decrease in value correlated to properties that were directly adjacent to rail lines and impacted by associated nuisances that were not properly mitigated. (Fact Sheet prepared for the South Sacramento Corridor Phase 2 Project, 2004)

Summary of Comments raised by Land Owners respecting the draft Land Use Plan/Policies

- B. The predominant concerns raised by land owners within the study area are organized into two groupings based on their location within Site 1 or Site 2 of the study area.

Site 1

- 1. There should be more flexibility with respect to the permission of commercial land uses; commercial establishments should be able to locate anywhere within Site 1.**

Response:

The proposed land use designations for the subject lands are organized such that commercial is permitted fronting Centre Street, and residential uses are permitted in descending density/height as you move north from the Centre Street corridor. The reasons for the location of commercial as such are to add vitality to the Centre Street public realm, and also to ensure an optimum transition between commercial and low-rise residential uses. This arrangement will minimize any potential noise/lighting nuisance to adjacent residential, that might be associated with the commercial uses.

- 2. Additional height and density should be permitted for the subject lands fronting Centre Street, and Section 37 of the Planning Act should be applicable to the remainder of the subject lands to permit additional height and density on the entire lands in exchange for community benefits.**

Response:

The densities proposed in the land use plan/policy document are the result of a review of current Provincial, Regional, and municipal planning policy, urban design factors, the surrounding land use context, and a public consultation process. The draft policies address a range of objectives and concerns, and are considered to strike an appropriate balance with respect to densities and heights prescribed to the subject lands.

Site 2

- 1. The densities and heights proposed for Site 2 lands are too low and not appropriate for a Regional corridor.**

Response:

The heights and densities proposed for the subject lands are the result of careful study as stated above. It should be noted that the heights and densities proposed for Site 2 are lower relative to Site 1, primarily due to their further distance from the Thornhill Town Centre (where a transit stop is also sited) and because their depth is significantly more shallow than Site 1, permitting less transitional area to the established residential adjacent to the northern boundary of the lands.

- 2. The proposed built form and urban design policies are too prescriptive/detailed for an Official Plan.**

Response:

Within the last several years as the City continues to mature into a more urban area, there has been a pronounced emphasis placed on urban design excellence. It is necessary to include the proposed detail with respect to built form in order to achieve the desired form and quality of design. The study area is located on a Regional Corridor and it is important to achieve an attractive public realm with a thriving pedestrian boulevard to meet the Key Principles and Objectives of the vision highlighted earlier in this report.

Recognizing that slight deviations from the numerical factors provided within the Urban Design section of the policy document could otherwise require Official Plan Amendments, a new clause, section 12.10.2.2, has been added to provide a degree of flexibility in this respect. This policy permits minor deviation to the quantitative development requirements reflected in the Urban Design section of up to a 5% variation; provided that they assist the City in achieving higher quality urban design or other objectives of the Plan, as determined through the development application process.

Regional Implications

The draft Centre Street Study/Land Use Policies document supports key objectives of the Region of York Official Plan, adopted by Regional Council on December 16, 2009 and approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on September 7, 2010. Specifically the implementation of the Regional Plan's following objectives outlined in Section 5.0 – Building Cities and Complete Communities.

- (i) "To create vibrant and sustainable urban areas."
- (ii) "To achieve attractive and vibrant urban Regional corridors that link Regional Centres."

Conclusion

The Thornhill Centre Street Land Use Study which was initiated in March of 2011, was completed in co-ordination with the Thornhill Centre Street Corridor Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Master Plan for the wider area of study extending from Highway 7 and Centre Street, to Bathurst and Centre Streets.

The draft Centre Street Land Use Plan/Policies are the result of a comprehensive review of current Provincial, Regional, and City land use policy, the surrounding land use context; and, an interactive public consultation process. Comments on the draft Plan received from the public and Council at this Public Hearing or in writing, will be addressed in a comprehensive report to a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

Attachments

1. Location Map: Thornhill Centre Street Study Area
2. Existing and Proposed Heights (Maximum Heights)
3. Existing and Proposed Designations (Maximum Net FSIs)
4. City of Vaughan Active Together Master Plan – Map of Thornhill Community Planning Area # 9
5. Centre Street Land Use Study and Draft Land Use Plan/Policies (Council Only)

Report prepared by:

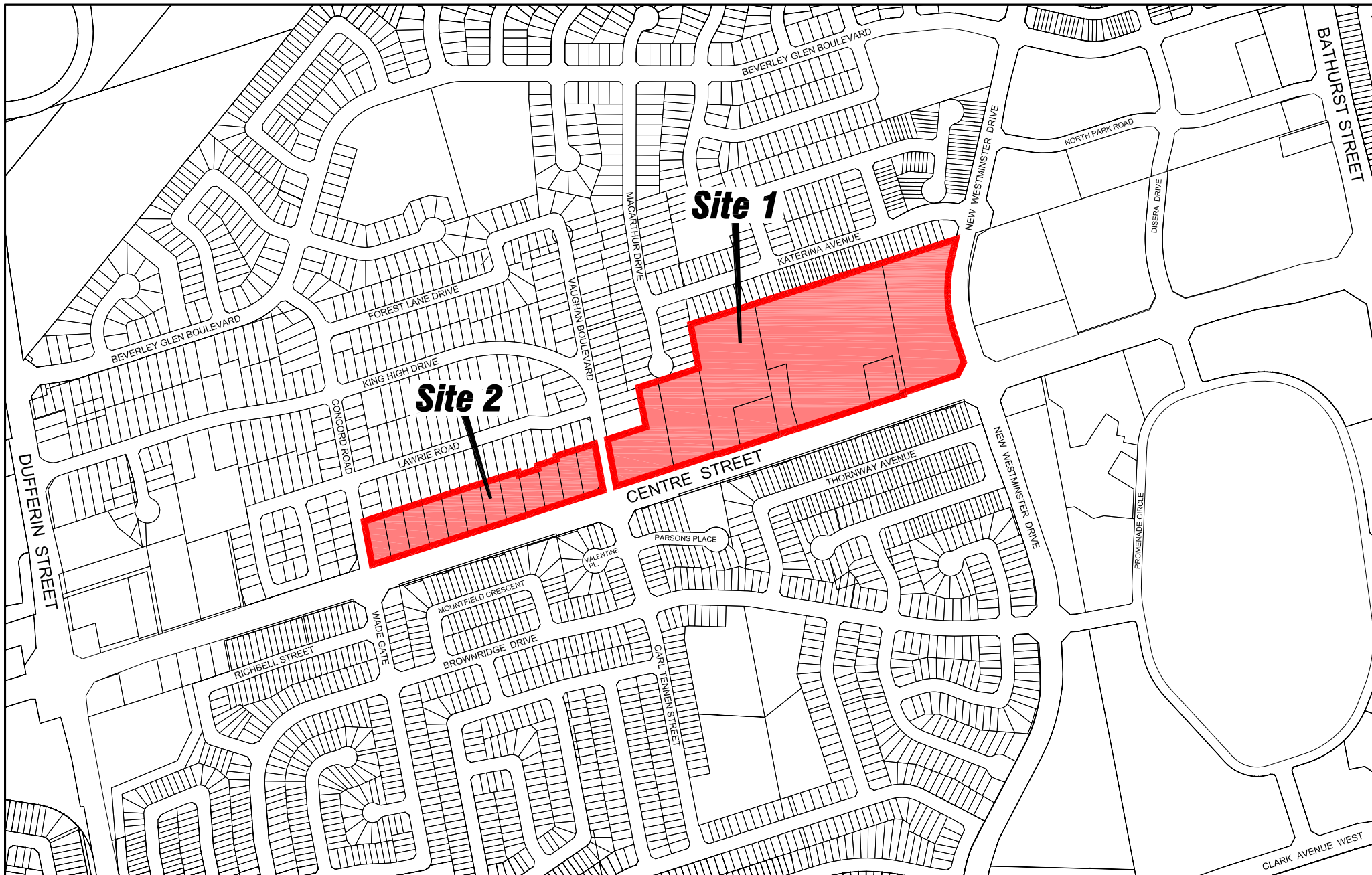
Anna Sicilia, Senior Planner, ext. 8063
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Respectfully submitted,

JOHN MACKENZIE
Commissioner of Planning

for: DIANA BIRCHALL
Director of Policy Planning

/lm



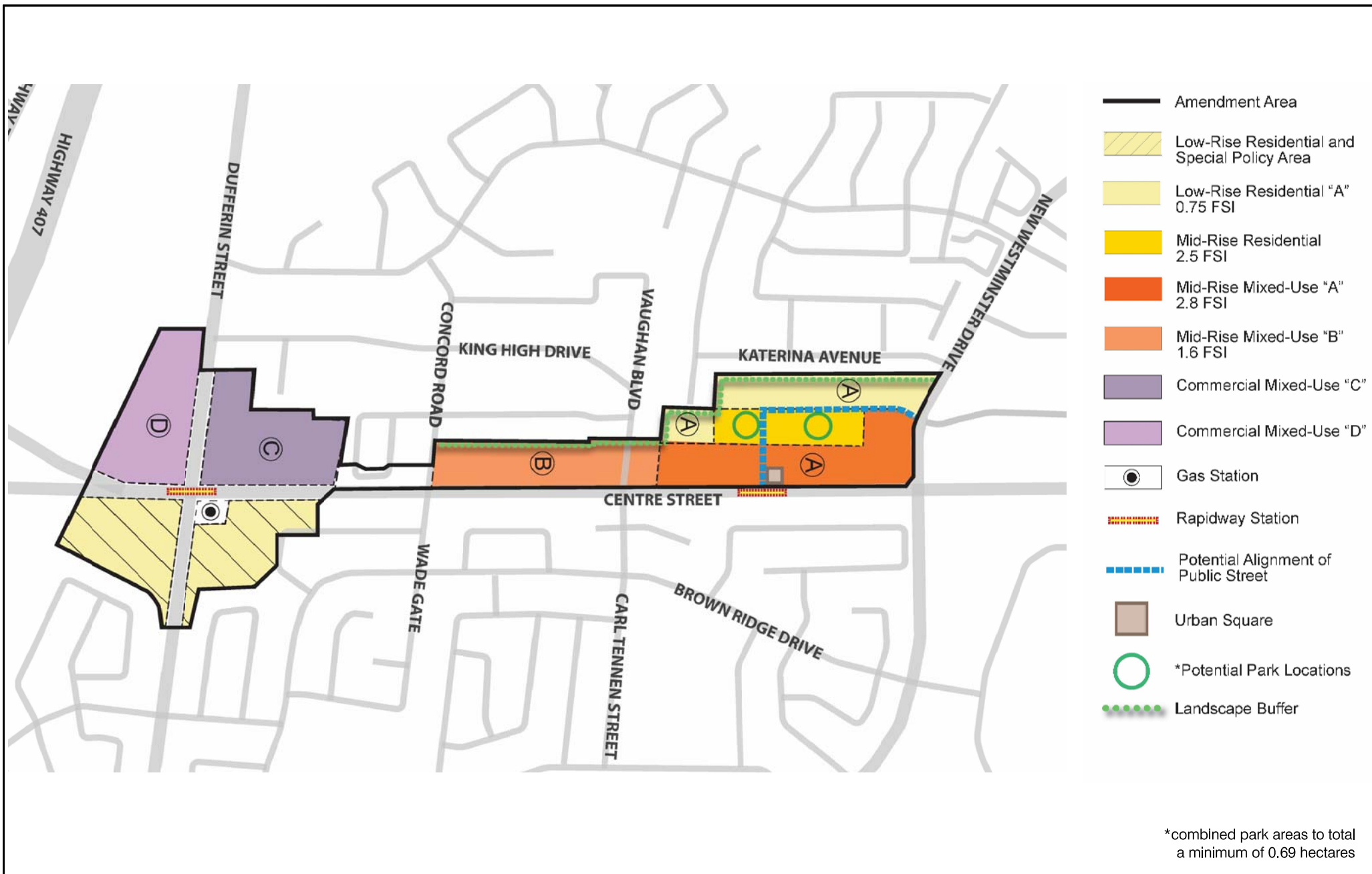
Location Map

Thornhill Centre Street Study
Attachment No. 1

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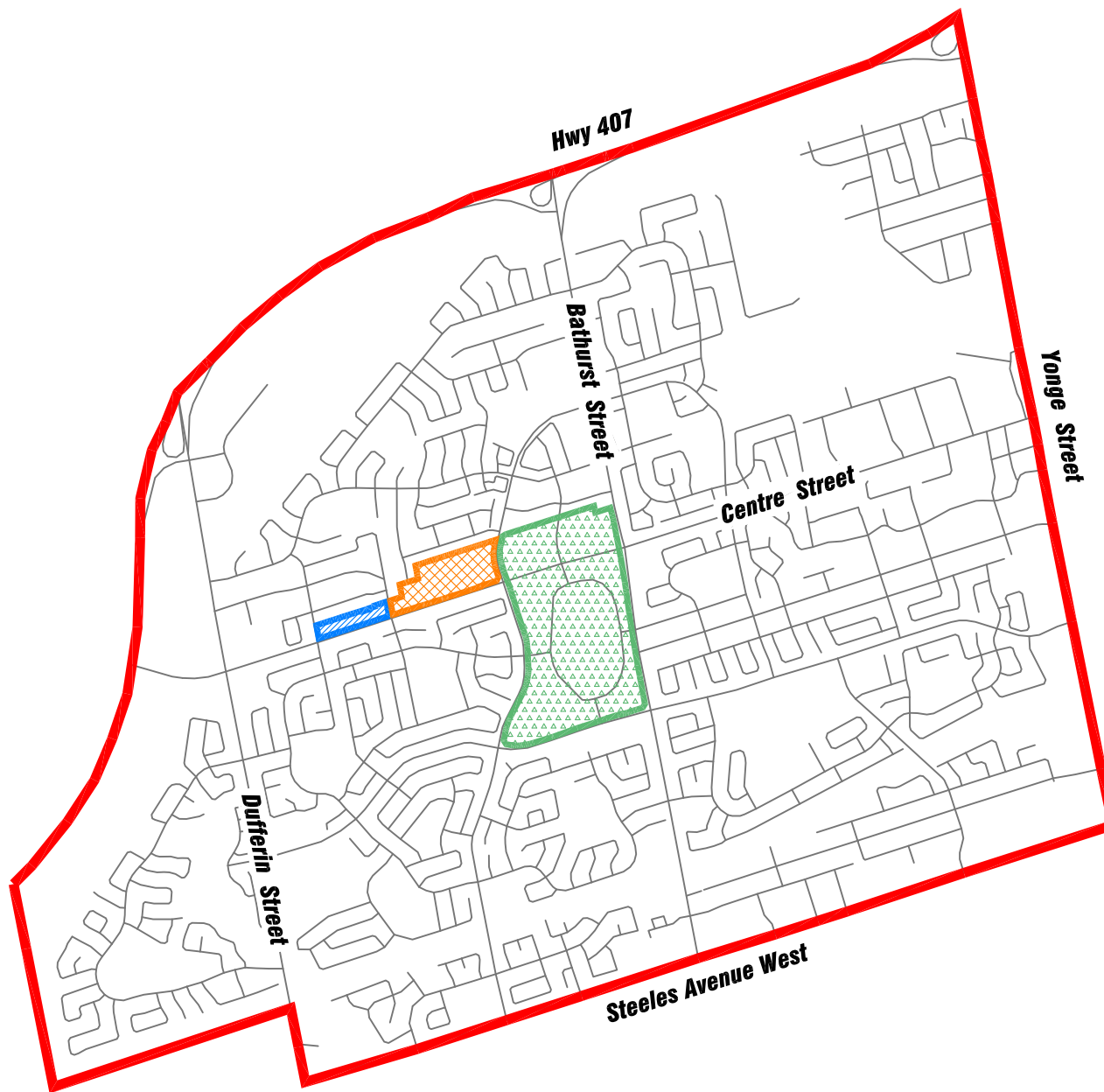
Existing & Proposed Designations

Community Planning Area No. 9 - Thornhill

Attachment No. 3

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-  Thornhill Town Centre
-  Site 1
-  Site 2

Not to Scale


COMMUNITY
PLANNING AREA No.9

Context Location Map

Community Planning Area No. 9 - Thornhill
Attachment No. 4

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