

Executive Summary

In October 2007, the City of Vaughan commissioned Young + Wright Architects to conduct an Urban Planning and Design Study of the Yonge Street corridor from Steeles Avenue to just south of highway 407.

Reports

This report is the first of two major reports for the assignment. The two reports are:

The Background Report is an inventory, analysis and assessment of the existing physical conditions, regulatory frameworks and current studies relevant to the study area. Also, this report includes summaries of the public consultation process as used by the City and the Consultant Team to gather observations and input from residents and neighbours to direct the planning of the Yonge Street Corridor.

The Final Report is comprised of a description of the urban planning, urban design alternatives, including sustainability, transit, transportation, servicing and urban quality factors. It presents the urban planning alternatives explored during the assignment, and the preferred, recommended alternative, together with strategies for implementing the recommendations where appropriate.

Study Area

The study area comprises two sections: The South Study Area and the North Study Area. The South Study Area has the east side of Yonge Street, from Steeles Avenue to Arnold Avenue, as its eastern boundary. The southern (Steeles Avenue) boundary extends from Yonge Street to Palm Gate Boulevard. The area incorporates the CN railway line on an approximately east-west alignment, approximately 600-700 metres north of Steeles Avenue. The boundary which connects the westernmost and northernmost points of this area follows an alignment of secondary and tertiary residential streets on the northern side of the CN railway line, as shown on figures 1 as well as figures 17 to 21.

The North Study Area has the east side of Yonge Street, from the northern boundary of the Thornhill Golf and Country Club to the northern boundaries of the residential lots on the northern side of Longbridge Road, as its eastern boundary. From this line, the area extends towards the west, to the western boundaries of the residential lots facing eastwards on Fairlea Avenue and Vistaview Boulevard. The boundary lines for this area are shown on figures 1 as well as figures 22 to 24.

Study Characteristics and Approach

The study is characterized by the following factors:

Variety: The two study areas have very different qualities: the northern one is primarily a low density residential neighbourhood, with an eastern edge accommodating some slightly higher density commercial uses; the southern one is a mixture of commercial uses along both Steeles Avenue and Yonge Street, with some high rise residential uses at Clark Avenue Yonge Street, and with low density residential uses behind these varied edges. Building heights and footprints, building types and many other characteristics of the two study areas are fundamentally different in nature. The study approach accommodates this variety.

Discontinuity: There is a 1.25km disconnect between the southern boundary of the North Study Area and the northern boundary of the South Study Area (Fig.1). The zone between the two areas is occupied by the historic Thornhill Heritage Conservation district and the Don Valley. The Thornhill heritage district has been the subject of a separate study and is therefore excluded from this assignment. The Don Valley is a protected watershed zone and is also excluded from this assignment. To accommodate the different communities in the north and the south, the study area was treated as two independent realms: for example, local densities, building heights, urban design characteristics were treated independently. In other respects, the study area was treated as a unified whole.

Several adjacent jurisdictions: The study area has several neighbours, and the City of Vaughan is part of the York Region. Neighbours include the City of Toronto to the south and the Town of Markham to the east. York Region has jurisdiction over some issues in both Vaughan and Markham and The

Toronto Region Conservation Authority has jurisdiction over the Don Valley. To accommodate the different jurisdictions, a Technical Advisory Committee, with representation from each public agency was an important guiding instrument for this study.

Concurrent relevant planning studies: The Town of Markham is conducting a planning study on the eastern side of Yonge Street, opposite the southern section of the Vaughan study area. This study will be completed during the time frame of this assignment. Also, the Town of Markham is conducting a planning study for a strategic site on the eastern side of Yonge Street, south of highway 7/407; this study is for a very high density proposed development, which will have an impact on the traffic, transportation, infrastructure and urban quality of the study area for this assignment. In parallel with this study the City of Vaughan is conducting a review of its Official Plan, in response to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In addition, several other neighbourhoods within the City of Vaughan are being studied by various teams.

The secondary plan and zoning bylaw implications of the preferred , recommended alternatives described in the Final Report will be coordinated with the parallel planning studies, especially with the Official Plan Review.

Concurrent relevant transit studies: Metrolinx, the Toronto Transit Commission, York Region, and other relevant authorities are collaborating on a study to construct an extension of the Yonge Street subway line from Finch Avenue to Highway 407 along the entire distance of both study areas. This proposal would incorporate several subway stations along the length of Yonge Street at the following possible locations:

The study is based on the assumption that a bus rapid transit system would be implemented along Yonge Street if the subway is not implemented. The implications of this unresolved transit situation (subway extension or rapid transit) are addressed in the Final Report.

- Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue
- Yonge Street and Clark Avenue

- Yonge Street and Royal Orchard Avenue
- Yonge Street and Langstaff Road East

Extensive public consultation: During the study several public meetings were held to gather information on existing conditions and on the challenges and opportunities faced by the residents of Vaughan as well as by neighbouring communities. For the generation of planning alternatives, a public planning/design charrette was conducted, to which all affected residents and stakeholders were invited. At this charrette, different groups developed different alternatives for various sections of the study area. These alternatives were assessed and further developed by the Planning Team.

Client Review and Approval Process: The City of Vaughan has implemented a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of representatives from:

- The City of Vaughan
- The City of Toronto
- The Town of Markham
- The Region of York
- The York Region Transit

The TAC meets regularly throughout the study and has reviewed materials included in this Background Report.

Each report is the result of an iterative process in which drafts are submitted to the City of Vaughan client group for review and comment. Client group comments are incorporated into the reports to meet the expectations and approval of the client group.

This Background Report and its Appendices will be bound together with the Final Report and its Appendices to form one comprehensive document, the *Vaughan Yonge Street Area Study*.